AFOOT THROUGH THE KASHMIR VALLEYS

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AFOOT THROUGH THE KASHMIR VALLEYS

View on the road to Pahlgám

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AFOOT THROUGH THE KASHMIR VALLEYS

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BY

MARION DOUGHTY

"One more day we thought the measure
Of such days the year fulfils;
Now how clearly should we treasure
Something from its fields, its rills,
And its memorable hills."

A. C. T.

LONDON
SANDS & COMPANY
1901

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Dedication

IN GRATITUDE TO THE WANDERER
WHO ENCOURAGED ME
TO LOOK OVER MY OWN GARDEN WALL
AND
WANDER INTO OTHER FOLKS' POTATO PATCHES
BY GIVING ME THE
BENEFIT OF HIS OWN VAST STORE
OF
TRAVELLERS' LORE

INTRODUCTION

MANY years ago a little girl with knitted brows and every outward sign of strong concentration was pulling at one end of a chicken's "merry-thought." The brows relaxed and the mouth widened into a delighted smile, "I've won it," she shouted, holding up the longer end, "and I wish to go to Cashmere."

"I don't believe you know where Cashmere is, and you will not go now, because you have told your wish," shouted her cousin defiantly, for he had not been pleased to be beaten by a girl.

Nevertheless, by dint of hard wishing and a good deal of patience, after long years the little girl arrived in Cashmere, but by that time she was no longer little, and people talked of the land of roses as "Kashmir" with a K. What she saw and did when she arrived there will be told to you in future chapters; that she felt her wishes were not wasted is proved by the fact that she hopes the day may come when she will be able to return to that beautiful valley and make better acquaintance with it. Meanwhile, if she, or rather I—for I may as well identify myself at once with the heroine of the merry-thought—can do anything to

disabuse the world in general of the idea that this lovely valley is only to be reached by an undue expenditure of physical force and nerve, to say nothing of filthy lucre, I shall feel that I have not lived in vain, but assisted somewhat in showing the "open door" of one of the most perfect holiday grounds of the world, offering nourishment to almost every imaginable hobby—for what would our holidays be without our hobbies? There the shikari, the student, the man with a taste for commerce, the soldier, the boating man, the artist will find plenty of food for his especial taste, even a philatellist of the most virulent type ought to be satisfied with a State that perpetually produces new stamps, and a numismatist can rack his brains as to the meaning of the strange devices shown on some of the modern coins, to say nothing of studying the ancient specimens constantly dug up. The invalid will rejoice in the exhilarating air, and the old man feel young again, while the habitual pauper must be forced to own the advantages of a land where a rupee will buy a sheep, and eight a suit of homespun clothes.

The mistake made by most people wishing to travel there is that they overburden themselves with preparations, make up their baggage to the proportions of a small Noah's Ark, and endanger their digestions by the variety of the tinned foods they provide. Without stopping short at the proverbial "flannel shirt and pair of boots," which many would say is the whole extent of the explorer's *necessaire*, it is only adding to the burden of the flesh, and straining to an

unnecessary thinness the tempers of master and coolies, if provision is made for every exigency in life, including the leaving of it with proper pomp and circumstance. A good servant will "always provide" not only the bare wherewithal of life, but such addenda as in his estimation are warranted by the position of his master and his own monthly wage. If he is well treated he will return the compliment, will see to your comfort—for his charge is more valuable to him alive than dead—and in case of demise will superintend all arrangements with a nice calculation as to the exact amount of pomp suitable to your income and dignity.

All that is necessary before arriving in the country is to provide one's self with some strong footwear—Kashmirian shoes, like many of their other manufactures, belonging more to the beautiful than durable order; any instruments and books required by one's special hobby—be it science, sport, or art; some literature light in matter and form—for coolies and ponies are the most formidable item of expenditure; photographic apparatus and saddlery, for want of which I suffered severely; and if there is any likelihood that the gay throng of fashion at Srinagar or Gulmerg will be entered, some English gowns and millinery will go a long way towards inspiring that respect that Englishwomen always hope for from their own sex! In Srinagar may be purchased all the ordinary requirements for life "out of society." The homespuns woven all over the valley in the long winter months may be bought for very little, and the

"dirzy" (at once the joy and the terror of every Memsahib) will, with small expenditure of time and money, fashion them into garments of comfortable shape and decent cut. The "puttoo" (homespun) merchants also sell splendidly warm cloaks lined with fur, a great comfort when on the exposed mountains; vast boots of the same material stretching nearly up to the thigh, very valuable when camping in damp places; and sleeping bags which they will make of puttoo or numdah (felt) lined with wool or fur. These numdahs are soft and thick, and can be purchased in practically any colour or any size and embroidered charmingly in crewels, according to the taste of the purchaser. They are used for almost every purpose, and are equally convenient for all—as mats in one's boat or tent, coverings for the lounge, bed quilts, as hold-alls when over-prolonged sleep has left but little time for packing before an early start, the handy headman dexterously with some string fastening the sides together.

There are two good English agencies, both managed by retired officers, where all camp outfit can be hired or bought, and thus the great cost of transport into the country is saved, and the purchase of the most useful articles ensured, for at both agencies reliable information can be had as to the condition of the various parts of the valley, and care will be taken to equip the happy traveller with the camp outfit most suitable to requirements. Parsee shops hold a very fair assortment of the foreign groceries craved for by our countrymen,

but my advice is to keep as much as possible to the condiments of the country, or anyway, those of India. Ceylon teas and French coffees, English jams, and canned vegetables are better in name than in substance, and Kangra valley teas, Punjaub salt, and the preserves of the country, also home-grown fruits and vegetables—dried when they cannot be obtained fresh—are more wholesome and less ruinous. The Kashmir wines, too, are no longer to be despised, and their Medoc and Barsac are both strengthening and pleasant to the taste. All sorts of wicker and wooden articles are to be bought in great variety, and silver and copper ware are only too tempting; draperies and hangings are to be had in quantities to charm the heart of the maid of South Kensington, pens, papers, and pills—if wanted—may be purchased without difficulty, and as all these "esteemed articles" are made in a form peculiarly suited to the land where they came into being, the traveller will do best to leave Pindi with little more than such things as bedding, warm wraps, tiffin basket, etc., which are essential for the journey in.

As to the cost of such an expedition as mine, some details may possibly be interesting to people who, with means not of the largest, have a wish to see something of that gorgeous East, which to the untravelled sounds so remote and unattainable. The voyage to India is one of those terrible black tunnels that one gets through as one can for the sake of what is beyond. However, there do exist strange people who, happily for themselves, can contrive to think differently of this

period, people who can rejoice at the sound of the dinner bell, pace the deck with determined mien when the ship is at an angle of 45 deg., and eat "nougat" in a Mediterranean swell. All credit to them, for they are a credit to Britannia, who ought to rule the waves a little more efficiently than she does very often. Apart from the unhappiness caused by this part of my travels, the ticket by P. & O. is an item likely to prove an insurmountable obstacle to many; but there are other lines where, if time is no object, passages may be had at extremely low rates, and where the small number of passengers adds considerably to the comfort and freedom of those who elect to go that way.

From Bombay travelling is very easy and pleasant; a through carriage can be had, and the three-day journey to Rawal Pindi accomplished without change, the train stopping at convenient times for food, and the charges both for rail and meals being very moderate. The Indian railway carriage at first strikes terror into the heart of the new-comer, it is so peculiarly bare and uncompromising, the leather-covered benches, running the opposite way to ours at home, appearing but poor substitutes for the luxurious snowy sleeping berths provided on home lines. But this is a tropical country, though in Bombay in the early spring one did not realise the fact, and air and cleanliness are the essentials, and all else is sacrificed to these, so as the sun lights up the khaki-coloured landscape, and its ever-brilliant rays toast one gently through, one is thankful for the ventilation afforded by the many

large windows, though the blacks that enter are of the largest, but at hand is a plentiful supply of water wherewith to remove our weather stains, and though on arrival at Pindi appearances are apt to be more variegated than is desirable, at least pleasant rest will have been found on the comfortable benches made up into beds by the handy "man-of-all-works" engaged at Bombay, and a hot bath soon removes the strange museum of geological specimens collected on face and clothes!

At Pindi the traveller can see and understand one of the two great buttresses of that Pax Britannica which allows solitary folk to wander unmolested from the great barriers of the "roof of the world" to little Ceylon, tiny pendant of the vast Indian Empire. The place is a large and pleasant barrack-yard, and one feels as outside the scheme of things as the small urchin who peers through the railings of the Wellington Barracks. Despite the incongruity one continues to peep, and in consequence, the emotional traveller must look out for a slight attack of Jingoism or Chauvinism, or whatever "ism" it is that forces him to keep reassuring himself that under no condition can "Britons ever be slaves," or that such beautiful, well-cared-for, well-mannered beings as our own Tommy Atkins could be worth less than two of any like body in any other country!

To return to the subject of probable cost, the railway journey to Pindi costs about 100 rupees; here the railway stops, and one must continue one's way

by tonga or riding. If time is no object and the season is not too early, there are various beautiful routes over the mountains, by Jammu, by Poonch, by the Pir Panjâl. Going by these passes camp outfit must be taken, of course, a sufficient number of coolies and baggage ponies, also riding ponies, for many of the marches are very trying, and the uncertainty about food and fuel makes it difficult to stay to rest. Going up early as I did—at the beginning of April—the Jhelum route was the best, and a tonga can be ordered at Pindi from the contractors there for about ninety-five rupees; besides this, a small tip will have to be given to the driver, and there are one or two tolls to be paid on entering Kashmir territory; if the whole cart is not required, a seat can be had in the mail tonga for forty-five rupees; only a small amount of baggage is allowed, the rest must be sent on beforehand by ekka, costing about five rupees the maund (84 lbs.). There are dâk bungalows on the route where the journey can be broken, and where the prices are fairly moderate except for English goods. While in Kashmir the cost of living can be calculated to a nicety. A "doonga"—the native boat—can be hired for from twenty to thirty rupees a month, including the boatman; and a reliable list of rates for the purchase of all daily requirements, from the hiring of coolies to the price of bread, can be obtained from Sahib Rao Amarnath, an official appointed by the Maharajah to look after the interests of visitors. He represents in his fat, comfortable person

paternal Government carried to the furthest limit, and is equally ready to order condign punishment for your servants if they overcharge in any particular, or to insist on the re-loading of your ponies if overweighted. He is exactly the right man in the right place, and the threat of "referring the matter to him" will influence coolies on strike even away in far-off valleys! It is a system, the adoption of which in so-called more civilised countries would greatly assist the helpless foreigner.

Both food and firewood are cheap, so living seldom costs more than about 1 rupee 3 annas a day, and to save the annoyance of friction over daily pilferings, it is a good plan to contract with one's headman or khansama (cook) to feed one for that amount. Unless one has with one good servants used to travelling, it is better (and I found I was very generally agreed with) not to hire Punjâbi servants at enormous wages in Srinagar, but to pay one's boatman, while on the river, a trifle extra to cook, and to take an extra man to do errands and various other small jobs, and when up the valleys to choose some young Kashmiri and make him headman, with the distinct understanding that the right rates are known, and that you will give him a small present at the end of each month if there has been no friction to disturb your serenity, and no attempt at fancy prices. The younger he is the more likely he is to be honest, and I have seen a comfortable camp managed by a boy of fifteen at seven rupees a month. In the valleys, where the cold is often great at night, your headman will require puttoo coats and

"rassad" (an extra allowance to cover the increased cost of their food). Coolies are paid at the rate of four annas a day and ponies eight annas. The latter, where possible, are preferable, carrying more in proportion (often a maund; a coolie only carries twenty-five to thirty seers, a seer being 2 lbs.), and giving less trouble about food and warmth. On the whole, if no very expensive expeditions are carried out, and rests are made in each place, it is possible to live quite well for seventy or eighty rupees a month. Shooting is an expensive amusement, as licences are now costly things and good shikaris can get their own terms, and if "doongas" are not sufficiently luxurious the house-boats will be found to be highly rented. The really ruinous plan is to remain in Srinagar, where all day long the visitor is assailed by the cunning merchants with beguiling manners, who always bring the most tempting wares ever seen, and by a finely simulated indifference to pay, and an accurate knowledge—purchased beforehand from the servants—of the exact amount of the master's income, lead the poor victim gently into temptation, and fill the boat with such ramparts of pretty things that finally escape is only purchased by a few present orders and some vaguely generous hints as to future requirements, then salaams are exchanged, and a few hurried words thrown to the "retinue" show their share in the gains over the transaction.

As will be seen, it is a life of small things played out amid gigantic surroundings, this existence in the

happy valley hidden away from the outer world behind the great mountain barriers. Shuttered-in boats float by on the river, camps of unknown folk pass one on the road, occasionally greetings are exchanged with folk whom we knew not before and shall not meet again. It is a restful, unfettered, unique life amid all the beauties of a country decorated by Nature in her most varied manner, a land that is like a dream when one is in it, that haunts one with the reality of an obsession when its snowy peaks and flower-filled valleys have been exchanged for grey skies and grimy towns.

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I am indebted to the kindness of a friend for the metrical translations of some of the native songs quoted in this volume.

LIST OF PLANTS

THE following is a list of some of the plants, shrubs, and trees that I met with in my wanderings. Travelling rapidly, and usually with as little baggage as possible, I found it difficult to preserve specimens, and the task of naming them had often to be left for so long—books of reference not being easily procured—that it was difficult, sometimes almost impossible, to identify them. If I had realised at the time how much still remains to be done in the way of complete collections of the different orders I should have gone about the task of preserving my specimens more thoroughly. I give this list, in spite of its incompleteness, as it may encourage others who have more opportunities and greater facilities than I had to go on and do very much better. The water plants alone require much time and very careful study. Hooker's works and various lists compiled by travellers to be found in the library in Srinagar, and "Roxburgh," have been my chief aids in compiling the lists:—

RANUNCULACEÆ.

Anemone biflora.
,, rupicola.
,, Falconeri.
,, obtusi lobia.
,, tetrasepala.
Adoris chrysocyanthus.
Aconitum Napellus (?).
Clematis montana.
Thalictrum minus.
,, foliolosum.
,, alpinum
Pavonia Emodi.

CRUCIFERÆ.

Arabis amplexicaulis.
,, Alpina.
Cardamine macrophylla.
Sisymbrium Thalianum.
Capsella Bursa-pastoris.
Megacarpaea polyandra.

CARYOPHYLLACEÆ.

Gypsophila cerastioides.
Silene inflata.
Lychnis cashmeriana.
Cerastium trigynum.

Cerastium vulgatum.
Stellaria aquatica.

CRASSULACEÆ.

Sedum quadrifidum.
,, linearifolium.
,, Rhodiola.

COMPOSITÆ.

Solidago Virgaurea.
Tanacetum longifolium.
Erigeron multiradiatus.
,, Alpinus.
Achillea millefolium.
Leontopodium alpinum.
Gnaphalium, alpinum luteo-album.
Doronicum.
Carduus and cnicus (several varieties).
Senecio chenopodifolius.
Teraxacum officinale.
Lactuca dissecta.
Prenanthes.
Cichorium Intybus.

CONVOLVULACEÆ.

Cuscuta reflexa.

CAPULIFERÆ.

Betula utilis.
Corylus Colurna.

CAPRIFOLIACEÆ.

Sambus (three varieties).
Viburnum lantana.
,, foetens.
,, nervosum.
Lonicera quinquelocularis.
,, obovata.
,, spinosa.

BERBERIDEÆ.

Berberis vulgaris.
,, Lycium.

PAPARVERACEÆ.

Papaver dubium (?).
,, Rhoeas (?).

VIOLAECÆ.

Viola arenaria.
,, biflora.
,, serpens.

SAXIFRAGACEÆ.

Parnassia ovata.
Saxifraga ligulata.
,, nivalis (?).
Ribes rubrum.

ONAGRACEÆ.

Epilobium augustifolium.
,, roseum.
Circaea lutetiana.

UMBELLIFERÆ.

Pimpinella saxifraga.
Bupleurum (several varieties).
Chaerophyllum.
Pleurospermum.
Archangelica officinalis.
Heracleum Caudicaus.
Hedera Helix.
Punica granatum.

The chief of the larger forest trees (the smaller I have already mentioned) are—
Platanus orientalis.
Celtis australis.
Taxus baccata.
Deodar.
Pinus excelsa.
Abies Webbiana.
Ulmus montanus (?).
Yuglans regia.
Betula utilis.
Aesculus indica.
Alnus.
Acer (two varieties).
Rhus cotonus.

Of the three allied orders, Irideæ, Amaryllideæ, and Liliaceæ, there are many varieties to be obtained. I have not been able to make a satisfactory list owing to the difficulty in identifying them, and the great variability of the iris due to slightly different soil or

climate. The following are a few of the varieties I have been able to identify :—

IRIDEÆ.

Iris Kamaonensis.
,, Duthieii.
,, Hookeri ana (?).
,, Spuria.

Also a small bright blue species, and two very handsome sweet-scented varieties, one white and one mauve, veined with a reddish brown.

LILIACEÆ.

Eremurus Himalaicus.
Fritillaria Roylei.
Fritillaria imperialis.
Lloydia Serotina.
Gagea lutea.
Polygonatum verticillatum.
Tulipa stellata (?).
Colchicum luteum.
Trillium govanianum

AMARYLLIDEÆ.

Ornithogallum.
Hypoxis aurea.

POLYGALEÆ.

Red and blue milkwort.

GERANIACEÆ.

Geranium nepalense.
,, pratense.
Oxalis acetosella.
Impatiens (yellow and red).

PELASTRINEÆ.

Euonymus.

AMPELIDEÆ.

Vitis lanata.

HAMAMELIDEÆ.

Parrottia Jacquemontiana.

BORAGINEÆ.

Cynoglossum denticulatum.
Lycopsis arvensis.
Mertensia primuloides.
Myosotis sylvatica.

GENTIANACEÆ.

Gentiana tenella.
,, aquatica.
,, venusta.
,, carinata.

POLEMONIACEÆ.

Polemonium caeruleum.

AMIRANTACEÆ.

Amiranthus paniculatus.

EUPHORBIACEÆ.

Euphorbia pilosa.
Euphorbia wallichii.

NYMPHÆACEÆ.

Nymphaea pygmaea.
,, stellata (?).
Nelumbium or speciosum (white, pink).
Nymphaea alba.

MALVACEÆ.

Malva rotundifolia.

RUTACEÆ.

Skinomia laureola.

RHAMNEÆ.

Rhamnus purpurea.

LEGUMINOSÆ.

Lathyrus luteus (?).
,, pratensis.
Lotus corniculatus.
Trifolium pratense.
,, repens.
Vicia sepium.

SCROPHULARINEÆ.

Verbascum thapsis.
Scrophularia lucida.
,, variegata.
Veronica ciliata.
,, serpyllifolia.

Veronica anagallis.
Euphrasia officinalis.
Pedicularis (pink—sweet scented).
,, bicornuta.
Verbena offinalis.

LABIATÆ.

Mentha sylvestris.
Thymus serpyllum.
Calamintha clinopodium.
Salvia glutinosa.
Salvia hians.
Nepeta erecta.
,, ciliaris.
,, raphanorhiza.
Prunella.
Lamium album.
Phlomis bracteosa.

PLANTAGINÆ.

Plantago major.

POLYGONACEÆ.

Polygonum alpinum.
,, amplexicanle.
,, rumicifolium.
Rheum (wild rhubarb).
Rumex acetosa.
,, hastatus.

THYMELACACEÆ.

Daphne caunabnia.
,, oleoides.

SALICINEÆ.

Salix Wallichiana.
,, Hastata.

LORANTHACEÆ.

Viscum (two varieties).

URTICACEÆ.

Urtica dioica.

SOLANACEÆ.

Solanum nigrum.
Belladonna.
Hyoscyamus niger.

PRIMULACEÆ.

Primula rosea.
,, denticulata.
,, elliptica.
,, purpurea.
Audrosace (rose, purple).

OLEACEÆ.

Jasmimum humile.
Syringa emodi.
Fraxinus communis.

CAMPANULACEÆ.

Codonopsis rotundifolia.
Phyteuma (blue).

ERICACEÆ.

Rhododendron campanulatum.
,, arboreum.
,, Anthopogon.

RUBIACEÆ.

Rubia cordifolia.
Galium triflorum.
,, boreale.
,, verum.

ROSACEÆ.

Primus padus.
,, cerasus.
Spiraea vestita.
,, canescens.
Rubus niveus.
,, fruti cosus.
Fragaria vesea.
Geum elatum.
Potentilla agrophylla.
,, nepalensis (?).
Alchemilla vulgaris.
Agrimonia.
Rosa moschata.
Rosa macrophylla (?), many varieties, have been unable to identify or name them.
Pyrus aucuparia.
,, malus.
Crataegus oxyacantha.
Cotoneaster bacillaris.
,, microphylla

AFOOT THROUGH THE KASHMIR VALLEYS

CHAPTER I

> Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road—
> Healthy, free, the world before me;
> The long brown path before me, leading wherever I choose.
> —*W. Whitman.*

Of the curious habits of babus and tongas—Of the wickedness of ponies and disagreeables of an overcrowded dâk bungalow—The Jhelum valley.

"TONGA hai? Kahan hai Kochwan? Babu hai?" Then as bad Hindustani had no effect, and silence and darkness echoed "where?" I tried a little forcible English, and demanded why a reasonable being should be asked to arrive at the dâk station at two in the morning in the pouring rain if there was no tonga and no driver? This time sheer volubility produced a reply, and under a gigantic umbrella there emerged from the Pindi railway station a shivering clerk in limp white clothing and grey cap. "What did I want?"

I answered to the point, "my tonga." The clerk

sniffled, "as yet it was but two, at two-thirty some tonga would be somewhere, and then it might be possible to get it; he did not know when it would start; some time, probably; it always did start, meanwhile it was raining hard"; like a dream creature he vanished, darkness and damp swallowed him up, and I was left limply holding my dressing-box in one hand, rug in the other; no star to brighten my dark world! A sound of wheels was heard, and I attempted talk with the driver—a difficult process when addresser's "bât" (talk) is none of the most fluent, and addressee has enveloped both ears in a comforter.

The latter was, however, understood to say that "it might be my tonga, how should a poor Kochwan know? he was paid to drive Sahibs, any Sahibs; undoubtedly he would start when all had arrived," he ended with a sniff expressive of many emotions—boredom, cold, and a general want of comprehension, and mistrust of all Sahib log. I grunted contemplatively; it might be the right vehicle, anyway it would afford some shelter, and at the worst one could but be turned out; having decided, in I clambered; the cold was intense, rain continued to fall in sheets, I felt I was reaching the "Promised Land" *via* Mount Ararat and the Deluge. Presently I heard my dialogue being repeated between the coachman and another anxious passenger. Like myself he decided shelter was more necessary than security of possession, and he clambered into the front, a small terrier scuttling under the seat, where it whimpered. Life must have appeared to him a limp and sodden thing, and warmth a forgotten joy. Time passed, Kochwan grunting, hound whining, front passenger snoring, then another altercation and a sound of

unfriendly adjectives hurled at Kochwan, Babu, the rain, things in general, and the third passenger got in beside me. Blessed man, he had a rug and no pets, so the former was shared, bundles adjusted, ponies violently castigated, and after fierce jerks and many efforts we were actually off moving through space apparently, for the darkness was so great not the slightest outline of passing objects could be seen.

The road was encumbered with many country carts and flocks; so I gathered from the hoarse shoutings and sleepy answers that arrived through the outside gloom, usually preceding much jolting and banging, in the course of which I and my partner nearly succeeded in changing places like tennis balls. We slept uneasily at intervals, with a strange impression of being the victims of gnomes who hustled and bullied their prey, as with wheels lifted high over casual boulders, or dragged through rocky "nullahs," we received the elbows of our neighbours in our side, or were hurtled by moving baggage.

Crash! this time something really had happened, shoutings rent the darkness, and cracks and the snappings of shafts could be heard. We were soon wide awake, and taking part in the general difference of opinion that seemed to prevail. Fortunately we were only spectators of the smash. The tonga carrying the mails had attempted to pass between the culvert of a bridge and a country cart, with the result that when we appeared, having in the general obscurity driven into the *débris*, the bridge was carpeted with mail bags, two "ekkas" were lying in drunken fashion prone on the ground, and darkness itself was riven by the remarks of the principals, to which the mutterings

of the onlookers added a thunderous chorus. As usual, the only man who accomplished anything was that ubiquitous man-of-all-works, the "British Sergeant," who turned up from a transport cart in the nick of time, sorted mail bags, sorted passengers, dragged ponies on to their legs, and in five minutes we were back in our respective vehicles and rolling along our uneven way.

Twenty-three miles out the road began to mount steadily, and the faint dawn revealed our weary features to one another. It was amusing the efforts made by each one to discover the likeness of his fellow-traveller, and having at one of the "intervals to change ponies" (they are changed every six or seven miles) been satisfied with our mutual sniffs, a spasmodic conversation was started which waxed on the smooth portions of the road and waned as we bumped laboriously over the rougher parts. Up and up we zig-zagged, emerging from the mists in the valley into sunlight above, a sunlight which glistened on dew-sprinkled roses, masses of clematis hanging in wreaths from white-leaved poplars and silvery willows, and cheered a scene where all seemed decked as for a world-wedding in bridal white, the creamy berberis and pink rhododendrons only showing off the general "snowiness."

By nine we were at Murree looking out on tree-clad heights, mountains all round, mountains backing each other as far as eye could reach, and the cold wind caught and wrapped and penetrated one till all memory of the heat and stuffiness of the cantonment now lying far below hidden in mists seemed incredible; they were things quite apart and cut off from this brisk climate. Here were people walking about in fur cloaks, Tommies in thickest overcoats, natives with their heads in

voluminous comforters, and a big fire blazing in the "guest room" of the hotel was hailed with joy.

We could not stay round it for long, and by ten I had started on the second stage of my long drive in a tonga of exactly the same build as the one in which I had ascended to Murree. Slung on two wheels, it was in shape something like a low pony cart, the two seats placed back to back, a canopy over it protecting us partially from rain and sun. The ponies were harnessed

Tonga

one between the shafts, the other giving "outside help," and running quite independently save for one strap. The system sounds impossible, but in practice worked fairly well, the wickeder animal having free scope for his sins, the milder keeping the vehicle straight on its path, assisted by the forward jerks of its companion. The road was very steep and slippery, and we proceeded at a pace distinctly to be marked "prestissimo." Suddenly the rain clouds broke and emptied themselves, and it was as if the heavens were descending in sheets

of icy water; we were piercing a crystal wall. Then it thundered, and jagged lightning flashes tore open the sky, on flew the ponies, sliding and skimming over treacherous surfaces of half-melted snow. I merely remarked to myself that as many people must have lived through this before reaching the happy valley, it would be distinctly unlikely that any special ill-luck should happen to me. Still it was a comfort when the halts came, for it is tiresome and difficult to perpetually hold one's breath. During one of these my driver drew over his pagri a knitted "Crimean helmet."

"Where did you get that?" I asked. "I am a Sikh," he replied (as one would say, "I am a king's son"). "I helped in the storming of the Sampagha; after that these warm things were given to us. I am a Sikh, a brave man, therefore I drive faster than all others on this road; I have no fear." It sounded noble, but subsequently I wished sometimes for a coward behind my steeds. As the hours went by, the horses were frequently changed; each new pair seemed to vie with the last in wickedness and trickery. At first a little jibbing or kicking had been the only excitement in starting; later they could not be persuaded to stir without administrations of the "chabúk" (whip) that would have filled a member of the S.P.C.A. with horror. Each new pair required an especial scheme of advancement; at one place they had to be prodded from the back, at another it needed the united efforts of their two grooms, reinforced by odd loafers, to jerk them forward, some delighted in a noose flung round a fore leg, and one unusually large black pony remained immovable in *statu quo* till a string round his ear had threatened the removal of that necessary limb!

About five we reached the last village in Indian territory, Kohalla, and shivering with cold, sodden with damp, stiff and aching, managed to crawl to a bungalow near by, where hot tea and a new cake put some warmth into me, and nerved me for a small incident that nearly caused the abrupt termination of the Kashmir tour before being begun. Our new ponies did not fancy proceeding in such bad weather, and jibbed; all the village turned out and pulled, Kochwan shouted, then the mob tugged; the moment was imminent when cart and cattle must part company, the off-pony knew better, he had been in that place before, wherefore he turned abruptly, removing his most pressing antagonists by well-directed kicks, and faced me with a grin. "See that," he said, with his wicked eyes, "now look at me," and with a jerk he had festooned all his light headgear over one eye and dropped the reins twice round his neck, "and now see where you are going." With a vast pirouette he had his head well down over the edge of the road, and was preparing to follow down the steep bank into the whirling, wind-tossed, swollen river below. Luckily, the onlookers were prepared; a rush, a noble disregard of life and limb as they hurled themselves on the practical joker, a strong push and a long pull together, and both steeds were at last looking the same way, and with two wild plunges fled down the hill. "Shabâsh" (hurrah!) shouted the people. "Shabâsh," echoed the driver, clinging to his reins. I remained silently thoughtful; it did not seem necessary to shout till we were out of the wood, or rather across the river, for at the foot of the steep hill, with a sharp twist, the road was carried over a suspension bridge with but sketchy barrier between life

above and an uncomfortably mangled death below in the tide; at the further end another double S curve took one on to the main road again, and we had reached Kashmir territory. I felt grateful to the gallant Sikh; still more so to the stout pair of reins!

The road widened and twisted, giant cliffs were piled up on our right hand, a steep slope on our left ended in the Jhelum—brown, tormented, tossed—the rain slackened, wind came in less scathing blasts, and as twilight set in I began to realise that at last I had reached the flowery land of my dreams, clumps of ruscotonus, most feathery of shrubs, filled up the undergrowth, the starry St. John's wort brightened the rain-drenched banks, tiny pink tulips and various other bright flowers cheered me with promise of future treasure trove.

Darkness had long set in when we reached our halting-place for the night, having come over one hundred miles since our early start that morning. Alas, and alas, Garhi as a "rest"-house proved a snare and a delusion; two large parties had taken entire possession. Not a room was to be had; only the fire in the common dining-room was available for drying purposes. Imagine the misery of a poor, shivering, rain-drenched human, aching from fatigue, speechless from cold, and dependent for warmth on the damp bedding that had for eighteen hours been dripped upon. Luckily, a hot dinner put some life into me; a fatherly Khansamah of huge proportions and ruddy-tinted beard offered to dry garments before the kitchen fire, and found it possible to arrange some kind of sleeping arrangement in a half-finished addition to the bungalow; and so to bed, in a room windowless and with

undried plaster, fireless, and unfurnished. Never was dawn so welcome. I could have sat up and crowed with joy, in reply to the giddy matutinal fowls, so pleased was I to hear them, and as a little fever can go a long way towards producing strange impressions, I was quite prepared when I arose, still voiceless and with a peculiar fluffiness about the head, to believe myself either one of them or anything else rather than the miserable sore thing I really was.

Phenacetin will work wonders in a short space, a bright sun do more, a good cup of tea most of all towards restoring a sane view of things, but it may very possibly have been due to a lingering high temperature that the mountains on my right seemed that day literally to touch the heavens, that the Jhelum on the other side became a coffee-coloured flood flowing far down in a vast seam in the earth, while all remembrance of the strange antics of the ponies has remained as a blurred vision of wild animals alternately balancing themselves on their tails and their heads in order that their legs might be free for gyrations of the purest phantasy, often dropping a hind leg over the "khud" (sloping bank), then trying conclusions with the huge boulders that strewed the road, the *débris* of the landslips caused by the heavy rains. It seemed due to a kindly chance that we did not, a score of times, end our days in the swift river, and that all the damage to ourselves accruing from the violent encounters with sharp rocks and other vehicles were such trifling damages as broken traces and the grazing a pony's shoulder; but we made our passing felt, leaving behind two over-turned "ekkas," one of which contained a very fat ayah, much injured in the upset.

The curious formation of the valley was very observable as we drove along, for, as the vast overhanging ranges receded from the river, the under cliffs, called "karewas," became visible. It is supposed that these formed the bed of the great lake once co-extensive with the present Jhelum valley. The fan-shaped plateaux are now the favoured land for cultivation, their

Ekkas at Baramula

rich, alluvial soil being the best suited for the saffron crop, a very valuable product. It was a land of contrasts that we were being whirled through. Sometimes mammoth slabs of rock towered above us in a manner anything but reassuring when one noticed the easy way in which they disintegrated after heavy rains; water-falls, frost-bound above, sun-loosened below, tore

and tumbled down the mountain sides, threatening destruction to all obstacles, and vast moraines scarred the hills, then, with abrupt transition, would succeed a grassy slope, starred with the most delicate spring flowers, shaded by fruit trees just bursting into bloom, or a cluster of wooden huts, the open work of the wooden shutters—glass windows are an unknown quantity—still closed with paper and felt against the rigorous winter cold, and sheltered by spreading walnut or chenaar trees (the oriental plane). The great size of the representatives of our forest trees was very noticeable—walnuts, planes, deodars, poplars, are all Goliaths, and dwarf the already tiny proportions of the houses and the "ziarats," wooden Mahomedan shrines, used as mosques. These are pretty little square structures with pyramidal roofs usually smothered with creamy imperial lilies, scarlet tulips, or blue iris. The Kashmiri is such a brawny, muscular person, one wonders how he contrives to live or worship in such wee boxes. Later, I became convinced that, like a squirrel, the householder never uses his dark, warm burrow save to secrete his winter food-stuffs, spending his life in the open, and only curling up round his kangar (charcoal basket) when the weather outside was impossible.

Hour after hour went by, and on we tore along this one specimen of a road as yet achieved in Kashmir. Always the same features were noticeable, though fresh beauties constantly showed themselves—piled-up masses of rock, the outer barricades of the great mountain rampart stretching for two hundred miles between India and the happy valley, an angry rushing river, bearing with giddy speed great rafts of timber and mammoth trunks that constantly blocked, and were

as often freed by the active natives running along the water's edge, spaces of cultivated ground often gay with the yellow flower of the rape wherever the karewas presented surface enough, and at long intervals villages of square, wooden cabins and carved boxlike shrines in a setting of great trees with flowery undergrowth of

Logs ready to be floated down stream

hawthorn, filling all the air with its sweetness, wild daphne and lilacs.

A "jhula," or rope bridge, spanned the river at one place, and had an unpleasantly "temporary" air; one strand acted as footboard, two others supplied support for the hands, and then all were free to "hold hard" or drop off, and I guessed which my unwilling choice would have been had I been forced to attempt its passage! All the modern Kashmirian structures

share this very "casual" appearance, and are in marked contrast to the massive stone temples, one or two of which we passed. These are found in many places, and speak eloquently of a bygone race of solid builders, whose structures have stood from one thousand to two thousand years successfully defying wildest storms and earthquakes, flood, and, as some think, the power of "villainous saltpetre." No one considers them now, for the people are Mahomedan, and the Hindu rulers prefer their new little gaudy tinfoil tabernacles; in fact, the modern Kashmirian, save for his sturdiness, is not a "solid person," and if one meets any monument likely to be permanent, one may be certain that a Britisher is at the back of it. For example, the Jhelum road, engineered by Englishmen, and achieved under their guidance at vast expenditure of life, money, and ceaseless perseverance, the nature of the rock out of which it is cut making the work both difficult and dangerous owing to constant slips and cleavages. It is now complete, and connects Kashmir with the outer world, whereby there accrues to the State that general prosperity which always follows the Pax Britannica, as great and valuable a reality in this wild corner of the earth, the bloody playground for many centuries of countless conquerors, as at home in London. It was a pleasant experience, and a tiny but sure proof of the wide influence of that same power, to arrive late in the afternoon of the second day, having driven two hundred miles through the heart of a wild, mountainous country, and find a riverside rest-house, where lodgings were as comfortable and property and life as secure as at any Thames-side inn.

CHAPTER II

A land of clear colours and stories,
  In a region of shadowless hours;
Where earth has a garment of glories,
  And a murmur of music and flowers;
In woods where the spring half uncovers
  The flush of her amorous face.
—*Swinburne.*

Of dâk bungalows and doongas—A coachman without a soul—And a boatman with imagination—Music on the water—Housekeeping details and female fashions.

Baramula, of blessed memory! What a perfect haven of rest did that long, low dâk bungalow appear to me. Still voiceless, aching from the chill of the previous day, and with sufficient fever to make me feel my head a curiously uncertain factor, the uncompromising white-washed walls of my room were strangely inviting. It was clean; it was dry; best of all, it was warm, for a pleasant wood fire was soon kindled on the hearth, and a big bowl of soup having banished my vague feelings of emptiness, resulting from my long fast since the early cup of tea, I prepared to sleep soundly. Next morning, when the sun streamed in, a new woman rose up, inaudible but otherwise sound

and sane, and quite prepared to make her choice among the innumerable boatmen who crowded on the river bank, each answering for the perfections of his own boats, each provided with a perfect library of chits (recommendations) from their former employers. They were amazingly alike in the loose white trousers and coats, puttoo (homespun) overcoats, their heads crowned with red caps or white pâgris. Each was ready to give all and everything—boat fittings and

Baramula

service—for a mere nominal price, to be paid any time, anyhow. Their chits spoke of them as paragons, and almost all looked amiable enough. "See my boat," cried one, "my furniture is all good English, my purdahs (curtains) are of the handsomest." So I stepped aboard and gazed with quite limited admiration at the one camp stool and thin cotton curtains. No, that boat would not do, the owner's wife looked far

too old and dour as she pounded away at the grain with her pestle and mortar. In such a country life would not have been possible without surroundings in keeping —bright, pretty, cheerful. Several other boats were examined, an ever-increasing horde followed asking questions, suggesting perpetually. Choice was becoming more and more difficult. "I want," I announced distinctly, "a good boat; one large enough for myself and my box"—I indicated vaguely the proportion of an Egyptian funeral ornament—"clean; I do not wish for other passengers, three or more legged; above all, I want a boat with a good appearance." I really meant, but dared not say, "crew" instead of "boat." Strange to say, my speech in laborious Hindustani was seemingly understood, for from the mob there emerged two pleasant-smiling youths, who salaamed, and bent almost double in their efforts to attract my notice. I went over the boat, tried the chair, admired the purdah, noticed a very pretty woman in charge of the steering paddle—the woman's work in Kashmir—and a nice brown baby in shirt and scarlet cap, glanced at some chits, as satisfactory as all the others, and decided to employ "the brothers" (so the two called themselves) Assiza and Sandhoo. Assiza was a fixed quantity, but Sandhoo, I found later, had a curiously shifting personality, for sometimes it was the young boy I had originally been introduced to, sometimes an older man, but however much my brothers varied, they were one in suavity and smilingness, and served me with excellent sense. Pleasant, human creatures I found them, ready to rejoice in my moods of rejoicing, and as ready to be vaguely obscure when there was a cloud on my urbanity.

The joys of possession were not to be entered upon immediately by me, for I wished to reach Srinagar quickly, to get my letters, and subdue my barking, and by road the journey could be accomplished in five hours. So the "doonga" engaged, I departed once more in a tonga to accomplish the remaining thirty-five miles of my route. I had seemingly reached a land of comparatively tame animals, and my ponies started with little more than joyous friskings and curvettings. The road lies rather apart from the river, and the whole valley widens out till the mountains that had closely kept us in on the right were little more than a distant white cloud. The sun was brilliantly hot, and lighted the long rows of poplars, planted on either side of many of the roads, and showing up like vast marks of interjection among the generally rounded tree forms, and glittered on the snow like masses of fruit blossom, and the tiny blue iris growing in thick, serried masses on every side, till they, too, shone like brilliant jewels, and filled the air, as primroses do, with a perfume compounded of spring freshness and the damp of thick greenery. A virginal world of blue and white we passed through—blue skies and white clouds, blue hills crowned with snows, blue iris shadowed by white fruit blossom. "Kochwan," I said, addressing the silent figure beside me, "what do you think of your blue iris?" "They feed well the sheep," he answered without further comment. It is an unsympathising world!

Srinagar was approached through vast avenues of poplars that led first to the market-place, where a chattering, pleasant-faced crowd laughed and talked and brawled incessantly, then across the bridge among pleasant gardens of gay English flowers, and soon after

I was disgorged at the dâk bungalow. Two days' coddling worked wonders of healing, and then things having been arranged for my reception, I took possession of my floating home. Now, in theory, a "doonga" is a light and airy thing, a house-boat without the house, a hull with a straw canopy; practically, a doonga can be remarkably cosy. The wooden boat is from fifty to

I took possession of my floating home

sixty feet long, with flat bottom and carved ends, and overhead are thick straw "chuppars," or screens, supported on wooden poles, and forming a covering and sides so close and firm that all but the fiercest wind and coldest blasts are kept out. Chuppars also divide the boat into compartments, leaving the stern end for the

benefit of the boatman and his family, his stove, cooking pots, and stores. A bed, a table, a chair or two, a gigantic bath, a folding chilumchi (basin), big hanging baskets for flowers, some boxes for stores and books, thick numdahs for mats and rugs, and my boat was soon transformed into a home. Many "woolies," too, had been purchased from a cloth merchant, and were both grateful and comforting. Assiza was interested in my decorations, but desired too much. "More chairs," he suggested. "No space," I replied. "More numdahs." "Yes, that was a good notion; they were so warm." So a friend was brought, who, like all his *confrères*, had the "best designs in Kashmir"—if they were not the best, they proved quite as good as any one else's, and two were purchased for "over and under" my "charpoy" (native bedstead). Then came the supreme question of dinner; "chicken and rice" I ordered casually without interest. Assiza put on a deeply-hurt expression. "A meal suited to the Huzur will be prepared." I smiled as I thought of the cooking pots and minute table equipage; but Assiza had not spoken without reason, and when he had laid the prettily-embroidered cloth purchased from the copra (cloth) merchant, set out the jam tins filled with iris, and neatly placed my small store of cutlery—two steel and one silver knife—I felt the preparation more than adequate for any eatables likely to appear, but the culinary skill of my *chef* had been underrated. Chicken, modestly veiled in a pile of snowy rice, and hedged about with a wall of spinach, an omelet that emulated the proverbial frog in prodigious puffiness, and a tart of dried apricots composed my banquet, and Assiza glowed with pride as he removed the tart and

gave me the daily "hisab" or account. Then my "hukms" (orders) for the morrow were given, and with the straw blinds firmly secured all round, the fore part lowered till all was taut and closed, I was ready to turn in under my warm coverings, a kangar well filled with glowing charcoal beside me, as cosy as in the most comfortable home bedroom.

Early next morning the splash of water told me we were moving, drifting down through the city, moved by the swift tide. By the time I was up we were clear of Srinagar and its many bridges, and were passing along iris-bordered banks, the boat dragged by the brothers—the younger pair this time—the tiny child acting as leader, with a loop of the tow rope round its waist, the father following to take off all strain. A pause for breakfast, a meal shared by two dear little Kashmiri robins, who, with the topsy-turvydom of the country, wore their red under their tails, and then I too went ashore, and during most of the day tramped along the bank ahead of the boat. Masses of iris and branches of sweet hawthorn were used to decorate my home, and late in the afternoon the lonely sanghara collectors of the Wular were surprised by the apparition of a floating "jack in the green." These dwellers round the great Kashmirian lake are strange, unsociable folk, picking up their living by harvesting the water nuts. We had been lucky in meeting with no mishap crossing so late in the day, for frequently wild storms sweep down from the mountains, and are very dangerous to the flat-bottomed native boats, and many an accident is recorded as having taken place on this, the largest lake in India, fifteen miles by twelve broad. The

boatmen still tell stories of the wicked city and its inhabitants that are supposed to lie under the blue waters, and, as proof of their veracity, tell you the name signifies "the cave." Landing after tea, the setting sun caught the distant white peaks of the snowy Pir Panjâl—the great range that barricades the southern side of the valley—and turned them a rosy pink, while to the north the snow heights stood out gaunt and stern against the darkening sky. A scent of mint filled the air, great droning moths flew by knocking clumsily against the lonely traveller, and flocks of rough ponies grazing on the coarse grass scampered away at the sound of unaccustomed footsteps. Some pink light still flushed the blue waters, darkened into deep patches by the great cargo boats piled high with the laboriously secured water nuts, while the shells were collected together on the mainland in heaps. Occasional sombre figures salaamed as they passed on the way to their dark boats. A great peace reigned in this corner of the earth—so restful, so remote, so unreal in its shadowy reality—and I remembered sadly how differently the scene must have appeared to an Englishman suffering, almost overcome, with fever, who, lying on the deck of his doonga, had looked across the wild, hurricane-stirred waters of the inland sea some years before, and realised that unless the boat could reach Baramula that night all hope of reaching Bombay (and Bombay meant England and renewed health) must be given up, and, knowing this, had used up his little store of strength, begging, threatening, encouraging his terrified men to persevere, only to be driven back by the fierce "tufan" after each attempt, so that at length, when the further shore was attained, he could only be

carried ashore to his camp, where ended for ever all conflict with contrary winds and tides, and a career of curious interest and conscientious effort. As I returned from my late stroll, Assiza was trolling out in a full, fresh voice a sad little song, pinging a dismal little accompaniment of minor chords and strangely broken arpeggios.

LOVER'S LAMENT.

I would have taken golden stars from the sky for your necklace,
I would have shaken rose-leaves for your rest from all the rose trees,

And you had no need; the short, sweet grass sufficed for your slumber,
And you took no heed for such trifles as gold or a necklace.

There is an hour at twilight, too heavy for mem'ry,
There is a flower that I fear for your hair had its fragrance.

I would have squandered youth for you, and its hope and its promise,
Before you wandered careless, away from my useless passion.

But what is the use of my speech? since I know of no words to recall you,
I am praying that time may teach you your cruelty, not me forgetfulness.

Finding it hopeless to combat the melancholy suggestions of the surroundings and the sad wail of my retainer's music, I concluded to retire, and trust to the morrow for some cheering influence.

In the early morning my boatmen punted me across to the other side of the creek, where we had been the night before, past some islands with dimly-seen relics of former great rulers, to a quiet little resting-place beneath the village of Bandipura, now an important place, being the starting-point for the Gilgit route. Transport ponies are stabled here ready for the relief,

telegraphic and telephonic communications are kept up with that distant outpost of the British "raj," and stores established for fruits and dried vegetables. Above towered many giant heights, great Haramuk seventeen thousand feet high, overshadowing the nearer range of Gwash Brari. Its massive triple peak is crowned by an emerald, so says tradition, powerful enough to render all snake bites innocuous. Snow falls for all the year, save for one week, on its rough sides, and in the hottest weather its glistening rocks afford a pleasantly cool vision.

My household was all out purchasing largely when I was ready to go ashore, food-stuffs being very low in price as compared to the more extravagant capital. "Fine chickens, five for one rupee," announced one of my retainers on his return from the bazaar. "Eggs of the finest, two annas a dozen; milk, twenty-four seers a rupee!" I quailed, for I foresaw the preparation of an orgy, the eating of which would result in my instant destruction, and the leaving of which would cause the face of my large-ideaed *chef* to be blackened.

Trusting for some means of escape when the hour had approached, and with a brief command not to create any delicacy that could not be made to get comfortably on my small dish, I tried to improve my acquaintance with the female portion of my crew. My task was not easy, for Mrs. Assiza suffered from shyness and a complete ignorance of all languages save Kashmirian; but I was able, as I tried to make myself understood, to admire her clear, rose-tinted, olive skin, the straight nose and brows, and the fine, brown eyes, set off by the tiny red cap worn under the homespun head-covering folded squarely on the head. The

universal frock of puttoo disguised effectively her figure, but the short sleeves turned back with white displayed her well-formed arms, and the brevity of her "pheran"

Mrs. Assiza

showed her splendidly-developed calves. Good-looking and strong, like most of her compatriots, the little lady was well up to taking a paddle or steering the boat, and

during the day worked the long, heavy wooden pestle with astonishing energy as she crushed the grain in her wooden mortar with long, regular movements. The child toddled up to say, "Salaam, Sahib," nearly falling over its own toes in its efforts to bow with reverence and elegance, while clutching tightly a bunch of great purple iris, recently gathered from a Mahomedan graveyard, covering the whole of a small mound near by.

CHAPTER III

In paths untrodden,
In the growth by margins of pond-waters,
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself.
Here by myself, away from the clank of the world,
Talking and talk'd to by tongues aromatic.
—*W. Whitman.*

Lazy hours—I cry "Excelsior," but the snows say "No"—Back to towns—A sheep is sacrificed—Shrines passed—And the chapter ends with song.

Two or three days were passed at Bandipura strolling about, for I scarcely felt at first up to very long marches, painting collections of flowers, trying to realise that I was "living" in this stageland, that all the folk around me were passing their time in their natural associations among their usual surroundings, not merely posing and "acting pretty" on a painted scene for the benefit of the lady in the stalls! Day after day the sun shone brilliantly, the snows retreated slowly up the mountains, fresh flowers came out, trees showed a brighter green, the serious business of the rice crop, the "kushaba" was begun upon. Passing through the villages, where the wooden houses were almost hidden by the huge walnut and chenaar trees, or resting on the edge of one of the

fields, it was seldom that I was not addressed by one of the villagers. They are a fine, swarthy race of men, with features of a slightly Jewish type, far heavier in build than the native of India, and possessed of a curiosity quite unknown to their *confrères* on the other side of the Himalayas.

"Salaam, Sahib," they would begin, not touching the forehead, merely saying the words and never using the incorrect "Memsahib." "Where do you come from? Where are you going? How far have you been?" There was no impertinence in the questioning, but a very real interest in something apart from their narrow lives. They nearly always spoke a little Hindustani, a talent quite unshared by the women, who, awkward and shy, seldom ventured away from their great wooden mortars, where during the most of the day they worked hard with their pestles breaking the grain, to take part in the conversation. The men would profess great astonishment at my walking powers. One old fellow, who several times addressed me, could not believe in them. "How far have you been to-day?" he would ask. "Seven coss" (coss is about two miles), I would reply. The answer would send him into paroxysms of laughter. "Haw, haw, that the Sahib should be able to walk so much ground; doubtless the Sahib's pony waits a little further along for her? No pony? Hee, hee, when I was young I walked, now I only ride. But for the Sahib to walk when she might be carried—what strange ways, what strange people!" I found that a little snuff was a much-valued gift, and in return a handful of walnuts or a bunch of flowers from the podgy fingers of some shy child would be presented. Merry little things they were, girls and

boys dressed alike in square shirts of the sad-coloured homespun puttoo, scarlet caps on their heads, the small maidens with a wonderful arrangement of tiny plaits of hair shed out with wool, standing away from the head, and tied all together at the end. All the world over, sweet things and toys will attract the "baba lôg" (baby people), and a few dried fruits and some tops would bring a little crowd together, the smaller carried by the larger on the hip, with a protecting arm thrown round. An unlimited faith in the capacity of the white man was evidently universal.

Constantly my advice on every subject was desired, questions as to the day, time, etc., asked—it was useless to explain that the watch had been left—that only led to a further demand for one's opinion of the time. "Does not the sun tell you?" I would say. "No, they preferred the Memsahib's time," and, curiously enough, my guesses were generally more correct, for, unlike most primitive people, the Kashmirians are bad time-tellers, and very unreliable weather prophets. Others would ask for medicine—"I have burnt my leg, and now the place has chafed; there is much soreness, and I want ointment"—in vain to explain that the only available medicine chest was many miles away, and that one of their own people was quite capable of washing and bandaging the sore. Even a dressing from a near stream and an old handkerchief were treated as sovereign remedies when applied by the "Sahib," and the healing power of their pure water and clear atmosphere was little short of miraculous. These conversations were often carried on under considerable difficulties, for our command of a common tongue was but slight; but nothing will convince a native that he

can be incomprehensible if only he talks loud enough, and by dint of shoutings and some "sign language" we arrived at a mutual understanding. My diet had been varied once or twice by fish caught in primitive fashion by wading in the water, a small net in the right hand. Deceived by the stillness of the fisherman, fish would make for the entrance kept open by fine bamboos, and then with swift movement of the left hand the unwary victim was hustled into the trap! The fish were neither large nor particularly well flavoured, but a change from skinny murgi (fowl) was pleasant, and I also enjoyed the "singhara" water nuts, dug up in vast quantities from the bottom of the Wular, where they sink when ripe. They are shelled, roasted, and eaten with ghi (clarified butter) and salt, and have rather the taste of chestnuts, and are most nourishing. Some more days of pleasant loitering, and then I decided to attempt the climb to the great Tragbal Pass, the main thoroughfare by which the distant Fort of Gilgit is reached, some one hundred and ninety-five miles from Bandipura, usually divided into fourteen marches. Regularly every year as the pass becomes open, troops go up to relieve the garrison there, and unprotected parties can travel on the road with no fear of murder or pillage. There is an alternative route over the Zogi Là, which has the advantage of being free of snow for a longer period of the year, but it is not so direct, and the road is really difficult in parts. It is only from April to September that these passes afford at all an easy passage. Even then they are liable to sudden tremendous snow-storms. In the winter months they are crossed by dâk runners and coolies, but are far from safe.

I had been told that it was too early to cross the

Tragbal with comfort, for snow had fallen lately, and was still lying at nine thousand feet, but as I have great belief in the theory of finding out for one's self, I decided on making a start, even if it proved impossible to carry the scheme through. It seemed best to make the ascent to the first rest-house early, and if things looked unpromising, to return on foot the same day, taking a coolie that he might take my orders in case I decided to go on. Soon after six one morning I was ready to begin my tramp. I had discarded shoes in favour of "chaplis," the pretty, embroidered leather sandal of the country, with which is usually worn a soft leather sock. I had also a puttoo coat and skirt, knitted gloves of pashmina wool, cap of the same in my pocket ready for the moment when the heavy sun hat could be discarded. A warm chuddah (shawl) and small tea basket and flower press were carried by my coolie, a brawny individual in cap, tunic, and knickerbockers of grey puttoo, with bare legs and grass sandals. The first part of the road was fairly level, past the village, which boasted a wonderfully good bazaar, under great chenaar trees, where stood a tiny Mahomedan fane covered with a glory of crown imperial lilies, on to the bridge of Sonarwain, which crosses the stream—here divided into three branches—and on through the pretty village of Kralpura, almost hidden among fruit trees and mammoth rose and jessamine bushes. From one of the best houses emerged my old friend. He salaamed vigorously. "And where is the Huzur going to-day?" he asked. "To the Tragbal and back," I shouted. Never was joke so appreciated. The quondam Sepoy—he had been in the army, I had made out—doubled up as he shouted to his son to look at the lady who was going

to climb the Tragbal without a pony. He regretted that the stiffness of his old legs prevented his accompanying me up, but he promised to sit and watch my return to see if I spoke true. Meanwhile, I must take a few shadh tût (mulberry, *lit.* honey worm), the very first brought by a Bhai (brother, used for any relation) from a favoured garden; also some roses. These I fastened behind my ears under my topi (hat), like a mountain woman, which delighted him hugely. Then I continued my walk, taking a short cut that led straight up the hillside, forcing one to clamber over prickly berberis, shrubby and unpleasantly thorny rose bushes not in their full beauty as yet. Every step took one over tiny blue gentians, starry anemones, clusters of the delicately striped pink and white tulips, violets, and countless other flowers. On rejoining the main road I decided to follow it instead of emulating the coolie and climbing straight up the face of the cliff. The zig-zag path I followed added four or five miles to my walk, but it was a wise decision, for, after all, it is but a foolish proceeding to arrive at one's destination a limp mass of aching bones, and this would certainly have been the result had I attempted the wild-goat like methods of the hillmen, who scarcely understood walking on an even surface. Backwards and forwards wound the path, every turn showing new beauties of snow peaks against blue skies, and frost-bound streams like silver threads among the dark pine woods, the distant Pir Panjâl, to the south, hanging like phantoms in mid-air, their base invisible by reason of the mist. Flowers, flowers everywhere; sometimes the hillside was rosy with the daphne mezereum, then yellow with an extraordinarily handsome umbelliferous plant, two

to five feet in height, and a light orange colour; sometimes tiny blue flowers starred the grass, thousands of gentians and forget-me-nots clustering together, or quantities of pink saxifrage mixed with the handsome wild rhubarb leaves, and the feathery asparagus. Tall eremurus and hawthorns scented the air, countless little birds twittered and trilled, tiny lizards with grey skins darted and glanced over the sunny stones. Five or six miles further on, the steep path joined the main track again. I found my coolie had met a friend who was carrying on his head—strange baggage on a lone hillside—two great brass church candlesticks. "Where was he going?" I asked. "To Gilgit." He expected much bad weather in the pass, but the Padre Sahib (priest) must go up to make his "tomasha" for the "officer sahibs at the fort." "Make tomasha"; such is one man's religion to another! But in spite of the expression, the respect for the man who to do his "pujah" crossed the mountains under such hard conditions was very evident.

The road twisted and turned; often it was blocked by gigantic boulders fallen from the cliffs above over which we had to clamber. The sun was intensely hot, and I was glad enough to find some tiny rills, freed by the warmth from their ice binding, and to drink their sparkling water, as brisk to the taste and with the snap of artificially aerated water. The higher one rose the sharper was the air; one's invisible wings bore one up, it was all but possible to fly! Gradually the snow, which had been lying in small patches, became deeper. I had climbed over four thousand feet, and we were nine thousand feet above the level of the sea. With so much snow at such a comparatively low level we knew that

further progress would be very difficult over a thirteen thousand feet pass, and so, unwilling as I was, I decided to turn back. After resting I had little wish to halt; the fine air, acting like champagne, had made me feel as if I had brought myself out in a new and very improved edition since the terrible time at the Garhi rest-house on our way in. Fed by the breeze it was a genuine "hawakhanah" ("eating the air"—taking the air, as we should say) on that clear, far-off height. The ten miles of road to be retraced filled me with no misgiving, in such an atmosphere there being no adequate reason for not "walking for ever." If men could negotiate perpendicular hillsides with fifty to sixty pounds on their backs there was no fear of twenty or twenty-five miles on a fairly good road with so much of absorbing interest on every hand. Nanga Parbat, "mountain of the gods," as the natives call it (Dyomir), could not be seen from my resting-place, but there were many lesser monarchs who kinged it in the absence of that mighty chieftain of Hindu Kush, highest among them being Haramuk, with his triple diadem of snow jewelled by the gorgeous sun, with diamonds whose facets were frost-draped rocks. Far below, the blue waters of the Wular sparkled in the mid-day glare, hemmed in south by range behind range of blue mist-draped mountains. Blue and white, those were the colours of the valley repeated again and again in the sky, the hills, the forest flowers; only the coolie and I were khaki-hued smears in the pure scheme of colour, dust images in a gorgeous setting!

The homeward march proved comparatively short, for I took the coolies' path, although as a mode of progression sliding over slippery grass and rocky boulders

on heel-less chaplis is distinctly inferior to tobogganing. It cut off nearly four miles of road, and by taking advantage of my accidental collapses, when the track wore its least amiable aspect, I was able to rest myself and collect specimens of the numberless small blue and white blooms that had been tempted by the fine day to come out and have a look round, and I was also enabled thereby to account for my unsteadiness, which might otherwise have shaken the confidence of the stalwart followers in my powers to walk down a rocky staircase with either skill or grace.

Below my old friend was waiting

Below my old friend was waiting, and at last he was convinced of the genuine character of my strolls, but was concerned for the blisters contracted in my rock *dégringolade.* "Much salt will harden," was his excellent advice, proffered at the same time as a large posy of roses and iris held by a minute grand-daughter, the vast number of her black plaits testifying to the excellence of her condition in life rather than the thickness of her hair!

Next day we slowly crossed the lake again, a world within a world, for the reflections were almost more gaudy than the real objects on the banks, and were towed up stream between miles of iris-decorated grass land, shaded at intervals by the massive foliage of chenaars. It was a lazy life, *dolce far niente* carried to its fullest limit. Other doongas passed, all alike, save for the distinction of the individual owner's taste in decoration. Many were hung with baskets of purple or white iris, and were guarded by yapping fox terriers, a race always to the fore where the British subaltern is about; some scorning all but the strictly useful showed nothing but piled cases and heaped tins. Passing through Srinagar the great strength of the tide—for the river is here pent up in unnaturally narrow bounds—made paddling a matter of no small difficulty. Extra men had to be engaged, and it was only by exerting their full strength that headway could be made under the bridges, where the water was like a whirlpool. They have a regular chorus they shout on such occasions to keep their efforts united, and they call on saints and prophets in a regular little litany to help ("K'Illah, Bismillah, Badshah"). The high wooden houses rising straight from the water, the squalor and the brilliance, the dirt and the endless wealth of decoration struck a reminiscent note of Venice and Holland, and promising myself some pleasant afternoon explorations later, I pushed on, noting incidentally that the number of boats in the English quarter had greatly increased during my absence. At night we tied up, the little bridge plank was removed later, and, cut off alike from nearer surroundings and the outer world, the doonga became a cocoon, in which a happy chrysalis

wrapped in its own dreams and thoughts forgot the past, grew careless of the future, and was lost to all but present interests and enjoyment.

Morning brought stirring events; the pleasant lap-lap of the water against the boat told me we were moving before I had looked out of my straw shutters, but I had hardly passed to full consciousness when a violent bump and a fierce altercation, followed by the sound of bleating protest, told me that something unusual had occurred. I dressed quickly to ascertain the cause of such early excitement, and found myself the proud but unpleased possessor of a whole sheep. I sternly demanded reason, and was informed that the prow of my ark had been run into the bank, thereby breaking the leg of the aforesaid sheep, the owner of which had instantly demanded compensation. Reason was plausible, but I had my doubts. A sheep is a visible thing, and a boat cannot run into it unknown of the four propellers. Moreover, there was in Assiza's eye a look I had begun to understand, a look that said, "To what extent may the Sahib be victimised?" "The sheep is but small," he urged in extenuation, "mutton is good, the price is but one rupee." That clinched the matter. One rupee was not too much to pay for the feasting of my crew, if I also had a portion. Nominally, of course, the entire sheep was eaten at the Sahib's table. No more sheep were run into for many days, and the hours seemed likely to pass without mark or event, a mere floating between blue waters and blue banks, blue skies overhead, blue hills on every side, when a tremendous shout startled me, and there was a great snake crossing the stream, head held high, a curious object, and quite harmless. Assiza seized it as it landed, throwing it over his head and back into

the water again. "Such a one last year turned round a Sahib's leg and bit his putties (leg bandages), but it failed to do harm." Happy valley, where even the "poison worms" are innocuous, perhaps by order of the great chief of the clan, Nag, the snake god, who is satisfied by being so persistently and consistently worshipped through long ages by many folk and many religions.

Later we passed Bijbeharra, a beautiful town, with a splendid bridge of the usual Kashmirian type, supported by enormous square piles of alternate logs and stones in layers, usually laid on a foundation of sunken boat-loads of stones. The enormous force of the stream is somewhat broken by the triangular wooden abutment, weighted with boulders, with the apex towards the currents. Largish trees had grown from between the logs, and with its vast camping-ground shaded by giant chenaars, carpeted with sweet-scented white iris and overlooking the private gardens of the Maharajah, it was a very lovely spot. A large Hindu temple had recently been built for the prince, the steps approaching it formed of carved blocks, evidently taken from some of the ancient Hindu buildings in the neighbourhood. Late in the afternoon two striking-looking women passed along under the trees, their ample scarlet petticoats, immensely high-peaked caps, and flashing black eyes a curious contrast to the drab-coloured housewives of the country. They were like gorgeous tropical birds in a home wood, and I guessed they belonged to the gipsy folk—that curious race so apart from all settled life that they are like immigrants from another planet, called Banjaras in India, Watals in Kashmir, Romany people at home. The characteristics of wild beauty, rough musical talent,

and wandering, predatory habits remain the same, and form a brotherhood with all that is free and untamed, and greedy of fresh air and open skies throughout the world. Throwing down the bundle she was carrying, one of the women asked if I would like a song. She beckoned to a small boy who was following, and he squatted down, resting between his knees a tiny drum, on which he beat lightly to keep time, the two women singing in recitative alternately some words of which this is a rough translation. The distant sounds of tom-toming and singing—the ordinary accompaniment in the East of wedding festivities—evidently inspired the subject.

MARRIAGE SONG.

Bridegroom.

I give you my house and my lands all golden with labour,
My sword, my shield, and my jewels—the spoils of my strife.
My strength and my dreams, and all I have gathered of glory,
And now, this hour I give you my life.

Bride.

I may not raise my eyes, oh, my lord, toward you,
And I may not speak: what matter my voice would fail,
But through my downcast lashes, seeing you there
I fear and tremble with pleasure beneath my veil.

Younger Sisters.

We throw sweet perfume upon her head,
And delicate flowers round her bed;
Ah, would that it were our turn to wed!

Dancing Girls.

See his strength like a tower,
See his teeth that are white,
Whiter than whitest môgra flower!
Finest, fairest, first in the fight!

Bride.

Would that the music ceased and the night drew round us,
With its solitude, shadow, and sound of closing door.

Passing Mendicant.

Out of the joy of your marriage feast,
  Oh, brothers be good to me,
The way is long and the shrine is far
  Where my weary feet would be.

For feasting is always somewhat sad
  To those outside the door;
Still, love is only a dream, and life
  Itself is hardly more.

CHAPTER IV

See the fakir as he swings in his iron;
  See the thin hermit that starves in the wild;
Think ye no pleasures the penance environ,
  And hope the sole bliss by which pain is beguil'
No! in the kingdom those spirits are reaching,
  Vain are our words those emotions to tell;
Vain the distinctions our senses are teaching,
  For pain has its heaven and pleasure its hell.
—*Monckton Milnes.*

Of religions, painful and otherwise—How I seek secularity along a scorching road, and am made to take part in sacred rites—I write a character for a saint—And am rewarded with roses and watercress.

A FEW miles above Bijbeharra was Islamabad, the principal commercial centre in the eastern part of Kashmir. The town itself stands back some two miles from the river, the actual waterside village being Kanabal. It is the starting point to many routes—to Poonch, Jammu, and the eastern ranges; and Kulu, Ladakh, and Rupshu can also be reached this way. I found it a religious place in a showy, picturesque, casual fashion, and in the course of a morning stroll some curiosities in worship showed themselves. The first was an Asiatic fakir of a most uncompromising type, who had been found many years before half-dead in the

snow. Where he had come from, what his object—if he had one—no one could ever know, for he never opened his mouth, asked for nothing, made no comment. All day long he sat in his tent, silent, swathed in a shawl, sad-eyed, serious, drinking water or eating a little grain when held to his lips by one of the disciples who took it in turn to sit beside him. At night he hung from a rope suspended by his crooked knees, head downward, resting on a wooden prop supplied by the generosity of some worshippers. For a long period he had rested without support. The man was no mere epileptic. As I dropped a copper into his bowl he glanced up with some curiosity in his eyes, and a strong, intelligent expression. What thoughts filled that brain, I wondered; had some strange secrets been wrested by him from some storehouse of human knowledge unknown to ordinary science; was his life one long endurance of the hours, or had he attacked and conquered one corner of the limitless desert of human ignorance? Strange that silence and seclusion should stamp a man so strongly with the mark of another world, for though he practised no rites, followed no religion, yet from the mere aloofness of his existence people were ready to conclude him a saint, and whether Hindu or Mahomedan, to treat him with the respect due to beings who live apart from the lines of ordinary human intercourse. We seek a heaven through the perfection of practical life. The Hindus turn their back on all that restrains the contemplative side of character. The course of existence can thus be diverted into different channels. But have either they or we discovered a royal road to the understanding of the world, or a golden clue to the unlocking of the doors

of the Hereafter? We shriek aloud our little convictions. The Hindu—if it is, indeed, knowledge that he holds—holds it in silence; and who shall say where as yet truth has been found?

Apropos of clues, the following of a most prosaic one led me to the Tah Dâk (telegraph office), and incidentally to two other forms of religion. No one in the place appeared to have any knowledge of any office or house from which telegrams could be sent, and it was only the sudden appearance of a guiding wire emerging from a high wall which led me to a sacred tank, and skirting that to a highly-carved door, above which the "guiding line" disappeared without ceremony. I opened the door, and was nonplussed by the warlike appearance of a huge goat—horns well forward, eyes gleaming, long, grey beard pendant. What next? I held my ground; the goat his. Was this a method of protecting Her Majesty's Imperial telegraphs,* or was it a mere domestic pet broken loose? A voice from above, coming muffled through wooden shutters, bade me "go up; do not notice goat." I obeyed the first part of the order, trying to observe a strict neutrality to the nanny. Possibly the latter had heard the voice of its master, for, standing aside, it allowed me to pass, and engage in what looked to me like a carefully-concealed trap. It was only a staircase, but rickety, and redolent of quite unique perfumes. By it I reached a low, dark doorway, behind which was seated a severe-looking individual in portentous pâgri. Possibly no one before had ever wished to despatch a telegram; probably he hoped to deter me from the practice of

* The telegraph service in Kashmir and Imperial post are under British control.

sending them, for his manner was alarmingly stern, and my modest message was made the subject of so much query and answer that the importance of the transaction was thoroughly brought home to me, and I departed, crushed with the mightiness of the machinery set in motion by my small requirements. It really is a curious fact worthy of some consideration that from that tiny spot in the heart of Asia, a dirty room, under the charge of a native and a he-goat, a message in a few short hours could be sent to a home in a little island in the North Sea.

Outside again I pursued my inspection of local faiths, and admired the clear waters that rush out from a spring here, filling a great stone tank built by Jehangir. On two sides stretched the buildings which originally formed his palace. The telegraph office was a small part. Vast chenaars shaded the spot. The tank was full of fishes that came greedily to the surface to swallow the great chupatties we threw to them. So large and fat were these great carp, they threw themselves upon the coveted morsel with a sound of gobbling worthy of an alderman's orgy in their greed, refusing a poor little yellow fish—quite a pariah, from its strange colour—any part of the feast. Ash-smeared fakirs sat round the tank, an evil smile curling their lips, eyes that glittered in snaky, restless fashion, a fine contempt in their general attitude for the religion that devotes gifts to such poor representatives of Vishnu Mahadeo as the fishes. From the tank I strayed round to another form of religion, and examined the Mahomedan shrine, which I had noticed at a distance, with a crown of pure white iris softly draping the deep, brown walnut wood of the roof that was further ornamented

at the corners by curious wooden tassels. The lower screening walls were covered with the pretty mauve blooms of the allium (*sphaerocephalum*), altogether a tempting place for worship. As it was a Friday, and the faithful were eagerly crowding to do their weekly duty, I was informed I might not enter, having eaten meat for my breakfast. This was a false assumption, but I did not correct it, knowing that especial graces may always be purchased, and the newer form of "persecuting the infidel" not being viewed with favour

Pony with saddle, the high peak of which served as a pommel

by me; but, noticing my lack of enthusiasm, the great doors were suddenly thrust open, and I was asked to admire, not the ancient carving of the temple, not the gorgeous colour of flower and woodwork, not the quaint conceits of old decorations, but five tombs of long-departed saints covered with dirty rags, once fine embroideries. Every one gave a quick salaam, watching me at the same time out of the corners of their eyes, to see to how much filthy lucre my admiration would run. It was expressed in a quite modest sum, to the

chagrin of the onlookers, and then mounting a tiny, dainty tat with gaily-decorated saddle-cloth and saddle, the high peak of which served excellently well as a pommel, I wandered away under the shade of over-arching trees to a forest glade some six miles away, called Bawan. Soft carpet of velvety turf, countless sparkling streams—several of which feed a large tank of sacred carp—plentiful beds of watercress, giant chenaar trees that gave a generous shade to all these,

Group of Hanjis

made up an ideal camping-ground, where, during the long, hot afternoon, I rested, and one of the hanjis (boatmen) trolled out songs in the old, old theme, with the old, old metaphors.

HANJI'S LOVE SONG.

You are my flower, and I would fain adore you
  With love and golden gifts for all my days;
Burn scented oil in silver lamps before you,
  Pour perfume on your feet with prayer and praise.

For we are *one*—round me your graces fling
Their chains, my heart to you for aye I gave—
One in the perfect sense our poets sing,
"Gold and the bracelet, water and the wave."

The heat was over-powering; the rushing, sparkling rills ice-cold; the fakirs that surrounded the sacred pond sat loathsome in their dirt and squalor; the Mahants (Hindu priests of the Pundit class, appointed by the Maharajah to look after the sacred fish) resplendently spotless in their white robes. My neat, well-dressed boatmen, in their comfortable encampment, were watched by miserable villagers from a very poor "ganw" (native village) near by, begging for food or pice. What a country of sharp contrasts it was, the result of the meeting of so many bygone civilisations that, alternately with periods of wildest anarchy and pillage, passed over the valley. In the cool of the afternoon I left the camp to visit some strange cave temples to be found a short way off on the right bank of the Liddar high in the cliffside. Excavated partially by man, these caves run far back into the hillside, and contain temples of the usual Kashmir form, built some one thousand years ago, and quite unworthy of remark save for the strange fact of the existence of people who could care to build in the darkness and gloom when all the land lay open to them—a ready-made background of perfect beauty. Our guide insisted on our following a narrow, dark passage that led to a tiny chamber where had lived and died a very holy fakir. "Why did he choose such undesirable quarters?" I queried. "Because he was so holy," I was told. "But how do you know he really lived here?" began the unbeliever. "Here are his

bones," was the triumphant reply; and there certainly was a fragment of a skull, and what might have been a thigh-bone!

Such overwhelming proof was, of course, convincing, at least if one wished to be convinced. I did not wish or care to be 'verted any way, but I did want to get to the outer air and the perfume of roses and jessamine and living things, away from these horrors of mortality, and the smells and stuffiness of airless places, and the haunting of ghostly swarms of bats that descended from the roof, touched one on the back, fluttered eerily about my head, pawed in ghostly guise the back of my hand, filled me with the dread of phantom terrors. I turned and fled, though the guide assured me that in ten minutes the place would be clear. Ten minutes more of such horrors would have cured me of all mortal ills for ever.

After that expedition I felt myself the victim of a plethora of religious formulæ, and decided that my next move should be to secular sights—some place that would only bring memories of purely worldly grandeur. For this reason I decided on visiting Vernag and Atchibal, places where the Great Mogul emperors built beautiful palaces, and in company of the fair dames of their court spent the long summer days under the pleasant shade of vast trees, or bathed in the cool, blue waters that, rushing from the rocks in many springs, fill the great stone basins constructed to receive them. Early one morning, in light marching order, I started with my men from the boat to do the twenty miles that separated us from Vernag. With the early freshness to yield a touch of tonic to the air, and walking along roads shaded with trees and peopled

by tiny green frogs, which added a pleasantly moist cool impression, the distance promised to be fulfilled in the twinkling of an eye, rather than in the shaking of a leg. Later on in the day when, after a noonday rest, a steep descent had taken us into a sun-baked, scorching valley, with no leaf of shade to protect from the almost blinding reflection on smooth, hot boulders, things wore a different aspect, and the way lengthened itself interminably. The rushing streams, on whose banks a delightful coolness had been found, soon dwindled to mere threads lost in a vast bed of great grey stones that reflected every glowing, burning ray. Not a tree was to be seen, save an occasional stunted willow, whose appearance I hailed with renewed energy from a distance, approached slowly, lingered under, and separated myself from sadly. The country of roses, jessamine, and berberis had been left far behind, and not a green thing relieved the weary eyes. The track gave the impression of having been marked out by cattle in wet weather and then left to its own resources, with result that progress was a perpetual emotion. One foot slid into a hole, much to the detriment of a fine blister forming on the heel; the other in its efforts to escape a stone fell in a rut. Stopping to give both time to recover, the sun threatened to fire them, and, in making a step forward, a hole hidden in the ground revealed itself in the twisting of an ankle. It was hardly with the alert, brisk step—a pedestrian's pride—that I entered the village of Vernag, but the mere promise of its shady glades seen from afar off had put fresh vigour into my movements, and coming to the first of the pure ice-cold streams that make this place so famous, I was quite prepared to forget all discom-

forts in my enjoyment of the refreshing coolness of its many springs and famous trees. The old palace still stands, little altered apparently since the day it was built, more than three hundred years ago, when Jehangir and the fair ladies of his court retired here from the heat of the plains of India and bathed in the blue waters, and arranged banquets and nautches in the torch-lit pleasances. Innumerable springs rise from the limestone rocks, and a part of their waters are caught in a vast tank built by the Great Mogul, and surrounded by him with a terrace supported by stone columns and alcoves forming bathing-houses. The waters as they flow away are spanned by a part of the palace, and are then diverted and divided, forming a series of terraces and waterfalls, the former filled by cleverly constructed fountains, still in good working order and able to fulfil their purpose in life. I laid out on the grass, a light wind just stirring the leaves of the trees above me, and the men made tea—the best tea ever presented for human refreshment, it appeared then—and when they had laid out my modest equipage close to the water, decorated the cloth with a bunch of apple blossom and pink roses, added a saucer of watercress picked close by to my modest feast, the successor of the emperors felt herself well satisfied with the taste of those long-dead architects, and with the provision made by them for the comfort of posterity. For the first time my experiences of sleeping accommodation were to be enlarged by the shelter of a palace. Into a large, panelled room overlooking the tank my belongings were placed, the sliding shutters fitted into the carved woodwork were taken out to let in the light, and I sat on the terrace above the water to enjoy the

last of the sun before it disappeared. From the further side emerged a figure in spotless white, the snowy pâgri folded after the manner of the Pundits. Salaaming gravely, he presented me with a little bouquet and a handful of walnuts, asked of my condition in life, inquired as to my welfare, told me he made many prayers, and guarded and fed the sacred fish of the tank; finally asked me for a chit, opening a small book for it, and presenting me with it. Now, in principle, a chit is an excellent thing, and by it, always theoretically, of course, a man and his ways, whether for good or evil, should be known from one end of Kashmir to the other. The practice, as understood in India, does not work out on these lines, for almost every man you meet—certainly all you address—demands a "chit," is hurt by its refusal, and is inclined to resort to methods of coercion if no other means will extort it. Now, my Hindu priest friend, the Mahant, was agreeable to look at, amiable in manner, but neither are essentials for his profession, and how was I to give a verdict as to his religious capabilities and powers of prayer? Excuses are of little avail against persistence, so I testified to his "good appearance and amiable disposition, as proved by his gifts," and added "that I felt incompetent to answer for the efficacy of his prayers." Quite satisfied, he departed to prepare for his evening devotions. In a minute or two I heard a sound of low chanting, with intermittent blowing of a most discordant conch, wetted to increase its powers. My friend approached, devoutly salaamed to the fishes, threw them some grain, and began a long recitative. Sometimes in his excitement his words came quickly in tones raised almost to a cry, then sinking

again to a low, monotonous chant. Vishnu was being invoked in his character of Mahadeo, Mahadeo creator, viceroy of Brahma, active power of the inventing mind; also the Vishnu who suffered the form of a fish in one of his numerous incarnations; Vishnu, the Preserver in the Great Triad. Then the wife was remembered, Sarasvati, the helper and companion of Mahadeo; finally, with real music, he sang a fine hymn to her under the name of Lakshmi—goddess of light. At intervals he had turned to me, as if to include me in the performance, and at suggestive pauses I had thrown in handfuls of rice. He did not require assistance in his choruses, but at the mention of Lakshmi, "Lighter of the world, by whose life-giving rays we follow our appointed path, and health and well-being are in our homes," he glanced up. "Dia silai" (matches), he asked abruptly. I had none. The hanji (Mahomedan boatman) was called, produced a box, and took it to the priest, and so we three of different races and alien faiths met together and shared in rites that would have filled the builder of the place with horror, and have caused a speedy termination to our careers if we had lived under his rule. Twilight had descended, the faint "gou-gou" of the sucking fish was a soft refrain to the mellow tones of the lonely priest's voice, only broken by the piercing notes of the conch shell that echoed far away among the hills behind us, telling to distant dwellers that the hour of evening prayer was come. The little lamp of scented oil mid the gloom imitated the pallor of the stars in the still, high skies, and backwards and forwards swayed the priest, chanting, singing, muttering, waving his "chaori" (fly whisk) of peacock feathers. When my shutters had

been closed from the outside, and I was left alone among the ghosts of long-dead emperors and their gay courtiers, the tiny sparks of light could be still seen through the lattice work, and short bursts of song told me that the Mahant was keeping his vigil.

"What gift, Huzur, for my beautiful prayers?" asked my devotional friend next morning, as he presented me with a fresh bouquet. I proffered a small gift. "Was my husband a colonel or general Sahib," he asked, "they would have given more." "No," I answered; "I give for myself; no colonel or officer Sahib pays my debts." "That was hard," he considered in sympathetic tones. "In that case the gift was sufficient, but many officers and commissioner Sahibs had thought very highly of his efforts, and given him much backsheesh; but he was glad too of the matches, a whole box, and would not forget the 'Presence.' He trusted she would be lucky in her walk, and her life blessed with health and prosperity." We mutually salaamed, and the lonely guardian of a forsaken Hindu shrine returned to his devotions and his unshared worship.

CHAPTER V

Glowworm-like the daisies peer,
  Roses in the thickets fade,
Grudging every petal dear,
  Swinging incense in the shade;
The honeysuckle's chandelier
  Twinkles down a shadowy glade.

—*Davidson.*

Aching blisters and scented blossoms — Ancient palaces and living princes—A visit to neglected shrines and a savoury supper.

From Vernag I determined to push on to Atchibal, in spite of the fact that I was hardly able to put my feet to the ground, the result of the rough, scorched tracks; in such a condition were they that they might have been correctly described "as blisters and a sandal." The sparkle in the air, however, and the early freshness, the soft green of the wayside trees, the tranquil beauty of the villages, set about with vast clumps of the great sweet-smelling iris, purple, mauve, and white, would have succeeded in putting heart of grace into a stone. I was soon oblivious to all small discomforts, and as thoroughly at one with my surroundings as if my whole existence had been passed between a rose bush and an

iris patch like the cheery little butterflies and twittering birds that kept up a continuous chorus of "good mornings" from the near bushes. What a world of colour it was! The sheer gaudiness would have frightened a painter, who would never have found spectators sufficiently credulous to put faith in his portrait. The sun poured threads of light into every purple bloom and glossy leaf, till they vied with the gold-shot robes of the saints in the early Italian pictures. Hillside, rushing stream, shady trees, all quivered with light and life; even the sad-featured labourers relaxed and stopped their work for a little talk, while their womenkind, usually so silent and reserved, questioned me as to my destination and doings, and held up pretty dimpled babies, clad in red caps and insufficient shirts, for me to praise and admire. A low range of hills had to be crossed, and the heat made the path slippery and tiring, but the descent was cheaply bought at the price of a little fatigue and some rough walking. In a few minutes I had passed from a gaudy flower carpet of crimson roses, yellow berberis, violet iris, to a world in white, Kashmir in her spring wedding garment, veiled in snowy blossoms, to a whiteness turned to silver by the sunny glow, a veritable Easter garden, full of sweet perfumes, an altogether unforgettable vision of loveliness. Hawthorns, a white viburnum, guelder roses, cluster roses, soft, loose peonies, spikes of eremurus, a small honeysuckle (*Lonicera spinosa*), and a drapery of clematis montana were answerable for the taller masses. Beneath, a carpet of tiny treasures, white arabis, strawberry flowers, shepherd's purse, and oxalis was spread out, while graceful Solomon's seals and a white comfrey filled all spaces between

the upper and the lower ranks. With such a wealth of treasures it seemed ridiculous to attempt the carrying off of a few miserable specimens, so I sat still and tried to make notches in my memory, that at least their numbers and variety might remain with me when their perfume and freshness had passed out of mind with so many more lovely things. But my men collected a great garland. It was part of a system of bribery they had found to work admirably, for when my tent or room was wreathed with blossoms, it was an impossible deed to find any fault with the skilful decorators on other grounds. I do not know why that particular hillside was so consistent in its flower scheme; perhaps the long winter months, with their snow coverings, bleach the flowers; maybe the slopes, unaccustomed to all save white, refuse the gayer blooms. Whatever the cause, that descent mid the pale blossoms, with the mingled scent of honey and fresh spring growth, will remain as one of those visions which, years after, return amid widely different surroundings, bringing, with the vivid impression of colour and scent, a heartache akin to that felt on opening a letter written by a hand that never can hold pen again, or entering a room once inhabited by a dear presence since passed away.

The march was some fifteen miles, and the mid-day sun was very trying, when emerging from the shady hill paths I descended to the river level again, and paced beside streams that inadequately filled their stony beds, or with caution crossed them by bridges that partook of the general character of modern Kashmirian structures, extreme elegance with the minimum of stability. Generally a bridge is merely placed to show that the path crosses that particular

stream. If the unwary passenger attempts to make use of it, it opens out in the middle; if a high tide comes down, it waits not to struggle for mastery, but departs bodily. Ponies have the sense while passing over to stretch their legs as far as possible, so as to distribute the weight. Soon after noon I reached Atchibal, another summer halting-place of the Moguls. There a palace of the usual type was built of chunam and stone, with a wealth of wooden lattice work and miniature editions to be used as summer-houses, distributed about the gardens, so that in the hottest weather the ladies could find coolness, and slumber peacefully, soothed by the sound of the rushing waters. The springs were innumerable, and were cleverly directed so as to fill the stone conduits flowing round the gardens, and feeding the numerous fountains which, on State occasions, were used to flood the terraces; coloured lights illuminating the waters and adding to the gaiety of the scene. When I arrived, I thought some lineal descendant of those old rulers must have returned again and be holding high revel. Hundreds of coolies, "kahars" (porters), grooms, shikaris were collected together in large camps; ponies innumerable, in gorgeous trappings, were picketed out; a vast range of small white peaks showed a big encampment inside the gardens, and the hurrying of gaudily badged chuprassis (official messengers, *lit.* badge-bearers) told me that unusual "company" was about. The chowkidar (watchman and caretaker) of the rest-house could only tell me that Burra Sahibs and Shazadas (big lords and princes) were there, and as he made ready for me tea served in fine china, and real "double roti" (English bread, only to be got in Srinagar), I felt convinced that

my much-appreciated feast must be closely connected with the magnificence over the way!

When my own men came in I made further efforts to ascertain into what "high society" I was being thrust, but information was vague, and I remained in ignorance. Waiting till the sun was a little subdued I started then for a walk and a quiet read under a spreading May tree of my "Lalla Rookh," eminently suitable literature for the occasion. Later on, trying to reach my camp unseen of my gorgeous neighbours, I was perceived and hailed with a warmth very far removed from the ordinary "Here's a stranger, let's heave a brick at him" of my countrymen—a warmth which seems to be generated under foreign skies by their lonely lives and the melting influence of more radiant suns. My lameness received much sympathy, and every kind of help was offered, from the loan of a pony to the proffering of a chair and carriers. Vegetables, fruit, and bread were promised me, all unknown luxuries to the ordinary traveller when away from Srinagar, and incidentally I discovered the Shazada to be a nephew of the King of Italy, touring and enjoying much sport under the escort of the finest and most experienced shikari among the English officials there. What sport he obtained I know not, but the contrast between the open air grandeur, the unaccustomed ceremonies, and the unconventional etiquette to be observed in the palace of a Mogul emperor must have given his tour a very real interest, even if it failed in its ostensible object. I bear this scion of a royal house no personal ill-will, but I trust that fate will not again lead me to spend a night in the vicinity of a royal camp. Natives see no object in wasting the beautiful moon-

light hours in mere sleep, when that can be enjoyed at any period of the hot day, so they—and there were some hundreds of them—gossiped, and chattered, and smoked, and discussed the small affairs of their tiny world, and were ready at dawn for a start, while the unfortunate Sahib was still doing her utmost to shake off the ill effects of broken rest. From Atchibal I determined to march to the Karewa, above Islamabad, on which stands Martand, the most glorious ruin in all Kashmir. The day was an anniversary, and I could think of no worthier spot at which to celebrate it. It was only five miles away, too, a mere nothing after my previous marches. Still, five miles is five miles, especially when it is nearer six—pardon the bull—as this route, owing to a forced detour, proved to be, and my lameness had not decreased since the day before. But no one can think of obstacles when they are in Kashmir, with a blue sky overhead, flowers on every side, and before them the prospect of seeing one of the most beautiful spots in the whole world.

I had soon an opportunity of testing my contempt of obstacles, for at the first large village to be passed the bridge was found to have been bodily swept away, owing to an increase in the stream. This was bad; worse was to follow, for the stream was found to be quite unfordable, necessitating a long walk up the bank, and when a safe point of crossing had been discovered, that miserable stream—entirely from a wish to annoy—had sub-divided itself into five. Wading may be a pleasant amusement when our years are few, and, as a consequence, our wardrobe of the sort that is easily rolled up; but with increasing age the inclination to try my luck over slippery boulders, swept by rushing

waters, had decidedly decreased. Making the best of things, and trusting that all inhabitants were temporarily occupied elsewhere, I started on my passage. I found it difficult to manage the nice balancing of those portions of my costume that I carried over my shoulders and my paint-box and flower-carrier, and to give at the same time proper attention to my footsteps. The fierce current of the stream was confusing, too, and once or twice I wondered how I could give a few last messages and directions, and if there were any really respectable natives who would consent to fishing out and forwarding my corpse, or, if owing to caste and other prejudices, I should be forced to remain forever between two huge boulders till, causing the death of many and various, I was removed by order of the health officer. Stalwart legs and a sharp stick finally were victorious, and panting, shaking, dripping, I arrived at the further side of the last stream, and sank down in the hottest spot, that the sun might be enabled to assist my inefficient handkerchief.

A steep climb up the sandy side of the karewa amid berberis and wild rose bushes, and I found myself on a level with the temple I wished to reach, but with two miles of sun-baked, shadeless fields to cross. The "pukka" road (made road) took a large curve to the west, and as I was desirous of reaching my destination with as little delay as possible, I skirted the crops, balancing myself on the narrow grassy ledges that acted as boundaries. Flax, buckwheat, and rape made pretty varieties to the ordinary cereals, and the numerous tiny blooms growing in every patch of waste ground gave a gay little finish to the colour scheme. All the natives I saw were much distressed at my

leaving the regular track. It was useless to explain I preferred the shorter way; they only shouted in shriller tones, with the idea that I should understand and turn back if only addressed with sufficient loudness. So incomprehensive was it to them that any one could prefer a direct route rather than the trodden way, I concluded they must be nearly related to our own Mrs. Grundy. Then one more grassy slope, and at last I stood beside the temple that had haunted me for two

A shadeless track

years, ever since the sight of a photograph had revealed to me the marvellous beauty of that lonely fane. Vague details of its erection, disputes as to whether Ranaditya King, its reputed founder, really built it, or whether he lived in the fifth century, or three hundred years later in the eighth; whether the side chapels were the work of his queen, Amritaprakha; and whether Laltaditya added the arcade—these things were all forgotten, or

pigeon-holed away in my memory, for discussion with some Dry-as-dust when no longer able to enjoy the glorious reality, together with such useless argument as to whether the roof was of wood or of stone, and whether earthquake or villainous saltpetre has been the motor power in the terrible destruction and havoc that had torn stone from stone, thrown down whole walls, and left but the shell of what must have been one of the

At last I stood beside the Temple

stateliest of the world's shrines. All these things that I had puzzled over beforehand were swept from my mind as I stood on the slope of the karewa, bent upward here to join the hill, sunshine above, sunshine around, the ground mosaiced with grey stones and pink-flushed roses, within sight of overwhelming snow heights, the valley spread out in a vast panorama of green fields and sparkling waters, glistening peaks fringing the blue sky.

Nothing appealed to me or touched me save the extraordinary beauty of those grey walls rising some forty feet, with sculptured surfaces and delicately ornamented pediments and pointed arches, and the grand entrance turned fittingly to the west that the setting sun might send its last rays over the temple dedicated to its worship—to Vishnu, as the sun god.

The iconoclastic fury of the emperor who attempted the destruction of Martand strikes with consternation,

Grand entrance turned to the west

but who can say whether, in the full glory of its complete beauty, it was as wonderful, as touching, as at the present day, when the nobility of its proportions and the grand style of the buildings are infinitely moving by reason of the humbleness and petty squalor of its surroundings, for brambles and wild roses encumber its courts and entangle the broken stonework. Its columns are entwined with ragged creepers, the inner shrine receives no offerings save rank nettles, wild roses throw rugged tendrils about the fallen

arcading, and delicate mauve and white iris, with their graveyard associations, bring a thought of human decay and the passing of all flesh into the temple of light and life. This lonely "watcher on the mountain-side," turned away from the rising towards the setting sun, has waited and witnessed to the everlasting power of light and beauty through long ages, while alternate waves of anarchy and progress swept through the valley. Powers have risen, fought, suffered annihilation, attempting to overwhelm this silent preacher of truths older, stronger than they, and it has withstood all their efforts, defied all their attempts, though suffering severely in its long defiance, and to-day it stands out still, unnoticed, uncared for, by the people of the land dependent for existence on a race who know not its founder, regard not its gods, and long after they and the memory of them have faded away, this lone monument will keep its vigil and set forth its silent teaching of endurance and courage, of beauty in strength, and steadfastness in the setting forth of ideals.

There was much of curious antiquarian interest about Martand, exquisite details of carving and ornament, strange fragments so Greek in character that they appeared to have wandered of themselves from their natural birthplace. All these things I noticed in perfunctory fashion, and hoped some day to realise. At the time it was enough to suck up, sponge fashion, all that could be realised of grace and beauty, storing the memory with details of that wonderful view extending one hundred miles down the river and sixty miles to the further side, with a background of crystalline heights—a world of blue and white, fit setting for the glorious sun temple.

The day was but too short for all the impressions to be garnered, the heat was tempered, clouds blew up, a coolness spread itself over everything, the sun began to think of its bed-going, and with sad thoughts of the many, many morrows that must pass ere ever Martand could be seen again by me, I, too, began to think of moving, but I allowed some time to pass in irresolution. Again I attempted to leave, and reached a tiny pond near which a vast crop of iris was growing. Impossible to depart without one more view, so I returned to have a last look at the great arch, over forty feet, by which the "nave" and cellar are reached. A woman in grey puttoo frock was there. "Why have you returned?" she queried; "why have you been sitting here? Why do the Sahibs like this place? One was here as late as yesterday making the pictures with the 'big eye' (a camera) after the manner of Sahibs. I understand not why you come; it is but a poor ruin, old, and the walls are all falling apart. When I visit the big temples I go to the great 'Manda' in the city, built by the Maharajah Sahib. A fine place that; it glistens in the sun like precious jewels. That is a handsome place; no mere pile of broken stones."

The woman grunted with exasperation at the folly of folk in general, and the peculiarities of the Sahib lôg in particular. Leaving such abstract questions, we found we understood each other better when we argued the question of the correct fee to be paid to her boy for carrying my small impedimenta to the boat five miles away. Women have naturally concrete minds, and they agree best when steering clear of the discussion of all but homely, matter-of-fact affairs.

Tearing myself away at last from the great sun

shrine I continued my way to the doonga, passing idyllic houses with beautiful iris crowns; endless wooden shrines, decorated with mauve alliums or scarlet tulips; and at last, very weary, very footsore, happy, hungry, wholly satisfied, reached my boat, where a great pile of correspondence awaited me, and, most pleasing of all—at best we are but creatures of our appetites—a savoury meal, very welcome after my long fast, unbroken since six o'clock tea save by some water and watercress. But refreshed and rested, my thoughts went back sadly to my lonely temple of the hillside. I had said good-bye to a friend whom I should probably never see again, save in the dull lines of fading memory.

CHAPTER VI

Past the masses hoary
Of cities great in story,
Past their towers and temples drifting lone and free;
Gliding, never hasting;
Gliding, never resting;
Ever with the river that glideth to the sea.
—*James Thomson.*

Some ruins—Fragments of their supposed histories—Dry-as-dust details and a short discourse on religion in the valley.

On my way down the river I stopped at various places to visit different temples and ancient ruins, for there is not a village in the whole of the valley that does not boast of some relic of old days. Fragments of beautiful carvings and pieces of sculpture may often be found lying about or built into the miserable edifices that represent all that a Kashmiri can accomplish in the present day. The people take little or no interest in these things, using them merely as easy quarries where all that they need in the way of stonework is provided, or turning them to account to increase their incomes, our countrymen seldom caring to visit what has ever been a place of worship without leaving some small contribution, though the showman is seldom a follower of the faith which the shrine was erected to honour.

If questions are asked, the inevitable answer is, "Built by the Pandus"; if one presses for more details, the only reward is a shrug of the shoulders, and "they or others; we are ignorant people, and the Huzur knows best; Sahibs come long way to see this, and always give poor man much backsheesh." Owing to the constant state of anarchy and the depredations of greedy conquerors, no traditions of real value exist in the present day, and the "great men," the men of authority who write books, are only to be believed until, as inevitably occurs, an exponent of newer theories arises. The best plan is to see everything one can, for these old builders were so skilful they could not place one stone upon another without a graceful touch or delicate piece of pleasant fancy, and then make one's own theory about them, regardless of what others have written or may write. By this system much poring over dull descriptions and "dry-as-dust" discussions will be avoided, the memory relieved of a great strain in balancing contradictory statements, and the shock spared of discovering that two of the greatest authorities are capable of differing to the extent of three hundred years in their respective dating of buildings. As for style, the Kashmirian architects of old time may have been under influences that seem to us strangely remote to have had power, but the whole matter is much disputed, and nothing can be stated with certainty. That no one may be disappointed of the pleasures of argument, I give for what they are worth in my description of the various holy places some of the different theories that have been propounded. Avantipura, close to the river, was my first halting-place. It has a stray likeness to Martand, but situated

originally in a less commanding position, it has suffered even more severely from the destroying powers of human hands and the havoc wrought by long ages. Tradition tells that in the ninth century King Avanti-Vanna reigned here, and built there two great temples, and dedicated them both to Vishnu as Mahadeo. The massive fluted columns still left standing are extraordinarily beautiful, and every part is decorated with a

Ruin at Avantipura

wealth of carving. The surrounding arcade has been entirely filled in, owing to some cause not definitely understood. A landslip or vast flood may have done the damage. A small portion sufficient to show the delicate grace of the arches and their supports has been excavated, and it seems a pity that the work is not thoroughly carried out.

The impression of Greek influences left by these

buildings is certainly so strong that it is difficult to believe that Greek art is not responsible for many of the characteristics of Kashmirian architecture, and Sir Alexander Cunningham has an ingenious theory relating to their inter-columniation. Like the Greeks, the Kashmirians are constant in their diameters, and have a certain fixed relation between the capital shaft, base, and diameter, quite unlike the Hindu builder, who varies his segment and his proportion with every pier. Now, Cunningham suggests that the word "Areostyle," used by the Greeks to denote an inter-columniation of diameters, one seldom employed by themselves, really means the "system of the Aryans," and he thinks the fact of the constant character of their designs and proportions, and the great beauty and perfection of their achievements points to the existence of a distinct style, which he calls "Aryan." These old Hindu rulers must have been both men of taste and men of means, for the valley is full of their structures, all of the same solid artistic type. The trefoil arch, rising high into the tympanum of the pediment, is a very noticeable feature of the style, and in all the details there is a constancy and a decorative quality which is as different from the unrestrained fantasy of Indian ornament as it is from the cold prose of modern work. Great uncertainty exists as to the dates of most of the buildings. Antiquarians were at one time in the habit of much antedating the respective foundations, and very incorrect ideas as to the vast antiquity of the remains prevailed, some authorities making them coeval with much of the Egyptian work. Nowadays these dates are much questioned. Some still consider it possible that portions

of the temple on the Takht-i-Suleiman hill at Srinagar are as old as the second century B.C., and that the little rock temple that I visited beyond Bawan at Bhumju belongs to a rather later period, but this is far from probable, and the majority reduce their age considerably. The greater part of the ruins now to be seen was probably erected between the fifth and tenth centuries. Sir Alexander Cunningham places the reign of Ranaditya, the builder of Martand, between 370-500 A.D., but Fergusson does not admit its foundation before the eighth century. Another difficult question is that of "roofs," for it is almost impossible now to determine whether the great fanes at Martand and Avantipura were covered with slabs of the same beautiful blue limestone of which they are built, or whether they were merely roofed with wood, or as some have suggested, were left open to the heavens —an improbability, one would imagine, in a climate liable to long periods of rain and snow. If a foreign influence is admitted—and it is almost impossible to deny it—it was probably wielded by the Greeks who settled in Afghanistan and the Punjâb frontier under Euthedymus as early as the third century B.C.

Besides the more extensive remains, there are small temples in good preservation at Ladoo, on the right bank of the Jhelum, a few miles below Avantipura, at Payech (this one is extremely perfect, the capitals of unusual beauty and grace), at Narastan, and in less good preservation at many other places. The miniature size of many of these is a curious feature. Excepting the great temples at Martand and Avantipura, very few attain to larger dimensions than those of a "down-country" shrine. The details are always carried out

with loving care, and the workmanship is very perfect, so that there can have been no idea of saving of labour. Possibly the havoc wrought by the great natural forces —by earthquake, floods, and fierce storms—filled with fear the pious builders, and, lovingly careful of their handiwork, they preferred a form better fitted by reason of its compact solidity to withstand such dangers, to one more imposing in size but less likely to endure. The fear of invasion by folks of other creeds may also have encouraged the building of less noticeable fanes. Certainly the smaller ones have escaped to a large degree the destruction wrought by iconoclastic rulers on the greater structures. The tiny temple models, sometimes found on pillars, are generally supposed to be funeral monuments.

Buddhism has left very few traces in the land. A rare stone with an image—possibly a Buddha—is discovered from time to time; otherwise the influence of those gentle teachers seems to have been swept entirely away. Far more living is the belief in the "Naga" (snake-worship). Half their religious rites are connected with this superstition, and few of the temples are built without either a moat round or a tank in front in honour of this god. It is, perhaps, in recognition of the faithful devotion offered that he keeps his myrmidons from worrying the inhabitants too much, poisonous, or certainly fatal bites, being small in number. The temple of Pandrethan has one of the largest moats I saw. This is a very perfect specimen of the later Kashmir style; ornament had begun to run riot, and the duplication of the parts betokens the change that was coming over the builders' art. Cunningham assigns as late a date as 930 A.D. to it, believing it to have been

erected during the reign of King Partha. At that time Srinagar occupied a site a good deal to the eastward of its present position round this temple, but some years after the completion of the shrine the old capital was entirely destroyed by fire, the moat full of water being the means by which the holy place was saved.

It is pleasant to think that that moat has been useful in its time, for I bore it no goodwill. When I visited

Stone Temple in water at Pandrethan

the place I found great difficulty in arriving at the temple. I had been told that a boat was to be had, by which means the passage could be successfully negotiated, but this boat had sunk in the ooze, and though the water had fallen very much, at the same time there was sufficient of the liquid element to make it impossible to walk across. Fortified by my recent experiences in wading, I prepared for further efforts

in that line, but, though rushing mountain streams may be alarming, they are very preferable—from the waders' point of view—to sloughs of despond. I know now what Christian felt, and I sympathise. I received no sympathy in my misadventure; two small children looking on were only intensely amused! Having made my preparation, I advanced a step; gently and swiftly the black mud closed over my foot and embraced my ankle; another step forward and the dark waters, or rather the terrible clinging mud, had enveloped me to my knees. I waited for nothing further. I cared not for the Greek ornament hidden away in the dome, the description of which had so raised my enthusiasm. I minded not that others had overcome the difficulty. I was ready to own myself vanquished, chicken-hearted, anything, if only I could succeed in escaping from the soft, hot blackness, with its terrible possibilities of writhing life and slithery inhabitants. Far, far better than such sensations was it to sit on the bank and gaze at the curious stone roofing in pyramidal form following the lines of the high pediments, and speculate how long it would be before the trees and plants that had grown between the blocks would have accomplished their wicked designs of destruction, or whether any could be found interested enough to attempt some preservation. Large portions of the roof have already been forced out of position, and it will not be long before it has entirely fallen in. At Patan, a little village between Srinagar and Baramula, there are also remains of two very fine temples erected by some pious king and his like-minded queen. They are of comparatively late date, probably not earlier than the end of the ninth century.

The most ancient relic of all is the temple of the

Takht-i-Suleiman, which, perched above the city, keeps guard over the inhabitants. As an antiquity, I own to having found it a very considerable fraud, for its great age, on inquiry, reduces itself to a possible 300 B.C. (generally considered incorrect), or a probable 300 A.D., and that is only the date of the outer wall and the plinth. The upper structure is remarkably ugly, and quite modern (that is, seventeenth century). I visited it on various occasions, and found naught to admire

Takht-i-Suleiman

save the glorious views to be obtained from it. Learned archæologists may be able to argue much from the small scraps of the earlier buildings; to me they were merely rough blocks of limestone. The temple is a very popular place of pilgrimage, crowds every Thursday mounting the steep rock on which it stands one thousand feet above the Dal Lake. I approached it from different sides, but none of the routes are very pleasant, and as

the hot weather came on I felt I was entitled to the pilgrim's reward, whatever that may be, when I achieved it. The Brahmin in charge, a kindly-faced old man, with a shrewd look of worldly wisdom in his keen eyes, would never take any gift, but generally gave me a flower or two from the offerings brought by the faithful—a rose and some marigolds. He pointed out to me an inscription on one of the pillars supporting the roof, and standing behind the central platform, with the great Sivaite emblem encircled by a serpent. The writing is Persian, and I believe sets forth that a Soukár, a certain Haji Hushti, raised the idol, but the dates are uncertain, and a portion of the inscription is hidden under the floor. Kashmir is a land of tolerance; the real feeling of the people is Hindu, and they practise its precepts of brotherly forbearance and silent endurance. The spirit of a race cannot be changed, though their form of worship is altered by royal edict, and in spite of nominally being Mussulman, in practice the "faith of the prophet" has lost most of its usual characteristics. There is a very real and living substratum of Naga worship, and this influences followers of both creeds. Buddhists have entirely disappeared from the country, leaving scarce a trace of their existence. The Sikhs are a very inconsiderable body, so that the inhabitants of the valley are divided between the two great creeds, some ninety-five per cent. being Mahomedans, the rest Hindus. They share their holy places and sacred springs very amicably. The Mahomedans refrain from killing kine, and the Hindus halál,* such birds and beasts as they may eat. Possibly the

* No Mahomedan may eat meat that has not had the invocation to the prophet said over it before life was extinct.

cruel persecutions and destruction ordered by Sikander, "the idol destroyer," and Aurungzeb imbued the people with a real horror of intolerance; more probably their forced conversion to a half-understood and wholly perfunctory form of religion left them still under the influence of their old hereditary creed.

CHAPTER VII

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal, naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way,
While heaven looks from its towers.

—*Browning.*

An early start—A distressed damsel finds a strange cavalier—Snow slopes and sandals—A lonely post office—Supper and sleep under difficulties.

After my various expeditions in search of antiquities, I felt entitled to a few days' rest in the shade of the great chenaar trees, whose sheltering foliage makes the Moonshi Bagh such an attractive camping-ground. My doonga was moored there, while I worked my way through a large pile of correspondence that had accumulated during my absence, and laid in stores and collected necessaries for some longer marches than I had as yet accomplished.

In a few days all my preparations were complete. "Orders to let go" were given, and I silently vanished away in that swift and unostentatious fashion which is customary in Kashmir, and which accentuates the sensation of restraint on return to regions where houses

are not movable quantities, and letters and bills pursue one from Dan to Beersheba, every casual acquaintance being let into the secret of name and address!

Slowly we punted our way through the Mar Nullah, where the obviousness of the odours was compensated for by its piquant picturesqueness, passed under bridges —some of them so ancient that they named Akbar as their founder—through other waterways, where a very heavy thunderstorm delayed us, fierce gusts of wind alternating with the deafening roar of the long, echoing claps. After tying up for the night under the protection of some willows, we crossed the Anchar Lake, a vast swamp, at times almost silted up with solid land, and before the afternoon were at Ganderbal, the starting-place for travellers up the Sind Valley *en route* to Ladakh and Baltistan. The last reach before fetching our moorings proved a severe pull, the stream, swollen by the melting of the snows, flowing down with fierce force, threatening to tear away the remaining piers of the broken bridge and overflow the low-lying fields. We found eventually a sheltered backwater, and, sending out my men to collect a couple of baggage ponies and some coolies, I roamed around and amused myself sketching, in very unskilful fashion, fascinating iris-crowned ziarats, dark-eyed children with scarlet caps, roughly-carved gateways set in flaming wild pomegranate bushes, and other delightful scraps of colour. The stuffy heat was trying, and added strongly to my desire for cooler regions—a desire more than satisfied, as will be shown. The mulberries were just beginning to ripen, and the children were out busily picking them. Thousands of these trees are found in every part of the valley, giving shade and refreshment

to the parched pedestrian. The cloying sweetness of this small wild variety soon nauseates, and in a short time they are left entirely to the cattle, great branches being cut or the fruit shaken down in heaps for their benefit. Returning to the boat by a path bordered with roses and jessamine, I plucked bouquets of the yellow and pink blooms, almost overpowering in their fragrance, and I was pleased by the appreciation of two coolies who stopped their downward march to collect some particularly good specimens growing high up among the rocks.

By six the following morning I was ready for our start, and watched the ponies being laden up. This their masters accomplished by the slow process of fastening on in insufficient style one object, and letting the pony wriggle it round, they the while grumbling at the weight, and always beginning the loads by the most unwieldy object, so that no room was left for other addenda. When the sight had ceased to amuse, I quite firmly, and not too mildly, suggested a different *modus operandi*, audibly stating the reduction from backsheesh necessitated by each hitch or slip, and at last had the pleasure of seeing my "Lares and Penates," nobly topped by the fine outline of the bath, disappearing at a fair pace down the sunlit road.

It was a day of days. A cool breeze tempered somewhat the fierce heat of the sun, and for several miles the road was shaded by great overhanging mulberry and walnut trees. Spring was in the air; hundreds of birds twittered and chirruped from the bushes by the wayside; thousands of butterflies wrought a flicker of colour. The villages we passed through were almost

hidden in a wealth of fruit trees, the vast green canopies of the walnuts and the brimij (*Celtis australis*) producing a charming coolness. Some six miles beyond my starting-point the road crossed the Sind, here a wide-spreading, brawling mountain torrent, the whole valley widened, the mountains standing back on either side. It was a "world of roses." Maybe people at home think they know what this means. I am sorry for them; they are mistaken. I have seen wild and garden roses in many places, as I thought, in vast quantities, but a land clothed in roses I did not know. They were in millions, the mingling of hues—white, blush pink, deepest blood red—producing a mosaic of colour amazing in richness, in variety. The grey rocks were hidden under the clinging bushes, the air was full of their perfume, they were as much the universal garb of the earth as grass and daisies in less-favoured regions. At intervals a heavier perfume told of the presence of bushes of the great yellow jessamine, with its bunches of handsome, luscious flowers. Impossible to hurry, it was difficult to keep to a progressive pace, when every instant the eye was arrested by some fresh object of interest.

Fifteen miles under such conditions did not seem a long walk, and it was only with a pleasant sense of enjoyment of the quiet restfulness that I reached the pretty camping-ground at Kangan, under a group of walnuts whose branches were plentifully decorated with mistletoe, a parasite that I found exceedingly thriving all up this valley. A long afternoon of reading and writing I spent in a shady nook above the streams, seated in a willow stump that stretched out over the water. The spot was wonderfully

remote and solitary, an ideal resting-place for some Hindu ascetic seeking knowledge apart from the world, but desiring a cell where "beauty did abound."

The night was almost as light as the day, so brilliant was the moon, and foaming stream and wooded glade were flooded with a soft, illuminating radiance that touched all things with fairy wand and added a new charm to what had even, in the more prosaic daylight, seemed all too fascinating. The start in the early dawn while on this expedition was a daily fresh delight, the dew sparkled in the light of the rising sun, a fresh breeze acted like a tonic, bracing one up for the walk, and all nature's colours bore an added brilliance. The march out from Kangan was especially delightful. Gently rising and falling, the path was sometimes on a level with the stream, sometimes high above it, crossing from bank to bank as the mountains closed in on one side or the other, leaving no space for even a goat track; everywhere the sweetness of newly-opened flowers, everywhere the brilliance of early spring foliage. In places the Sind, swollen by recent rains, became a mighty mountain torrent, carrying great trees with it in its strong current. At one point it had completely carried away both bank and path, leaving no choice, for the rocks rose precipitously from the waters, to passing through the tide, but retracing one's steps for several miles. That is always an undesirable proceeding when the day's route is already sufficiently long, and I was gazing rather sadly at the waste of waters with but small desire to repeat my wading experiments, when by came an old man with a laden pony, strange knight errant, but his lack of appropriate exterior was no bar to his efficiency.

"Ho! ho!" he laughed, for he was vastly entertained by my dilemma, "will the Sahib let me carry her across, or will she mount my pony?" The pony, I thought, had the steadiest gait, so on to his back I climbed on top of the great bags of salt; it was an uneasy perch, in spite of wedging in my feet under the pack on each side. But the pony was firm in spite of the swift current and the slippery boulders, and in a few minutes I was safely landed on the further side. I had not the wherewithal to reward my Charon, my purse being in charge of the headman, but a pice (about equal to a farthing), found lurking in the corner of my pocket, apparently was satisfying backsheesh. It would buy him a breakfast—two of the native barley-meal rolls being sold for that sum—and with many good wishes to the "Huzur" and more chuckles over the adventure, the old man went on his way. Breakfast under a giant walnut made a pleasant interval, and then I pressed on quickly, for clouds were gathering, a cold wind had sprung up, and occasional claps of thunder warned that the storm was not far off. A few miles of very rough walking on a track that switchbacked with a violence that forced one's knees into the condition of a cab-horse's of several seasons' wear, and Revel was reached, a tiny camping-ground at the mouth of the nullah, with a good reputation for bear. The hills here formed an angular shelter, for which I was very thankful, for the tempest swept down the valley, bringing with it a wild raffle of rain, and tent ropes and poles were strained to their last capacity. The river roared as it rolled along the burden of added waters; wildly shrieked the wind, snatching and tearing at our little canvases, houses, and earth, and

they were blurred and blotted out as if with a wall of smoked glass. Inside my tent things were not so bad as they might have been, for the flaps were firmly laced up, a deep trench dug round to carry off the water, and, curled up in all my warm wraps on my bed, I read contentedly, merely wondering if the pole did give way whether it would brain me, or if I should be painlessly smothered in the sodden sides of my dwelling!

By dawn the skies were clean swept, and when I was ready for my start at half-past six the sun was shining on a rain-drenched world, clear of every dust mark, decked by nature with her brightest hues, stainless and joyful. It was impossible to feel fatigue on such a day; every living thing moved with fresh energy, every leaf and flower was imbued with a new beauty and brilliance. The path wound about the side of the cliffs, carried over the stream from time to time by the most insecure of light bridges, that had to be used with infinite care for fear of sudden precipitation into the wild torrent below, the yawning spaces being more strongly marked than the connecting planks! I passed many herds of goats, some of them consisting of vast numbers. Their presence was too strongly marked by their sickening smell to be altogether pleasant, but they were handsome animals, many extraordinarily tall, with curious Roman noses, wicked yellow eyes, and shaggy grey beards. Their coats seemed marvellously silky, and it was not difficult to understand the beauty of the dresses manufactured from them when it was seen how perfect was the raw material. Some of the women in charge were of a very handsome, uncommon type, with tall, well-knit figures, handsome straight features, fair skins, and dark eyes. These Balti women

are a race apart, noted for their looks, which are in striking contrast to those of the men, who are dark and squat. They wore, too, a much more becoming costume than most native women. The long, loose trousers were of dull blue cotton with coloured stripes, the tunic of the same, and the curious high head-dress of blue material resembling much in form the headgear of the Pharaohs as depicted in their monuments, while round their necks were countless ornaments and necklaces, composed for the most part of coloured and silver beads, cowrie shells, and tassels of cloves. The wearers were much amused by my scrutiny, and returned my curiosity with interest, making apparently great jokes at my expense. Most of the men I met, either escorting herds or long trains of merchandise, or the baggage of sporting Sahibs, were of the distinct Mongolian type, very short, flat-faced, and swarthy. They were clothed entirely in sad-coloured puttoo, even to their loose shoes and caps, which, in general form, resembled quaintly those generally used by Frenchmen while travelling, having a queer peak in front and a turn-up brim at the back, and were ornamented with large bunches of the snow primulas tucked away behind the ears. The hair was worn either plaited into a minute pig-tail just reaching the neck, or frizzled out on each side of the face. Many of these hardy little porters had yâks instead of ponies or mules, and splendid baggage carriers these unwieldy looking animals make, with their bull heads and cob-like bodies. No amount of snow frightens them, and they are capable of keeping their footing on the roughest track though heavily laden, and, like elephants, are very careful of themselves, testing each step when on unsafe ground, and they make good though rough mounts when dangerous places have to be traversed.

Besides Baltis and Ladakhis various other of the rough, wandering tribes of Central Asia were to be met on the road to the Zogi Là, many distinctly of Chinese cast of countenance, others showing more of the Turkoman. So long as the pass is open, scarce an hour passes without meeting some party who have made their way across, and as each little caravan went by, it was amusing to speculate from dress and language what distant country they hailed from. Many encampments of merchants I passed. They had taken advantage of the first open weather to move on from the direction of Leh, where they had wintered after leaving Yarkand, Kashgar, and various other Central Asian markets, and carried with them a curious assortment of salt brick, tea, silver goods, exquisite silks and embroideries of great beauty of colour and design, printed Russian cottons, curious barbaric jewellery and polished pebble work from Turkestan and Ladakh. A sporting Sahib also passed after six months spent in the highlands of Astor, Chilas, and Baltistan. He looked almost as rough and unkempt as his own wild porters, who were bringing down a noble collection of trophies—ibex, markhor, thar, and several other varieties of the wild sheep and goat, besides some handsome bear skins. Sportsmen, if they wish to obtain any real success, have to push very much further afield than was the case a few years ago, when it sufficed to go into the hills a few miles from the Jhelum to secure good shooting and collect fine specimens. To prevent the absolute extermination of big game, the Maharajah has introduced a system of licences which works admirably, for while the scale is not at all prohibitive to one who comes up on six months' leave or for a longer period, it stops an indiscriminate slaughter of animals by those who, running up for a few

days or a week or two, were rapidly causing the disappearance of all game in the nearer nullahs. The sportsmen's life in the wild, rocky, barren hills beyond the Happy Valley is an exciting and an interesting one. The stalks are frequently over hills that to ordinary folk would appear quite inaccessible, and quite impassable for all porters; consequently, the keen shikari must learn to face all weathers and spend nights unsheltered from the elements save by such clothes as he stands up in, and perhaps a sleeping bag of felt and fur. This, and the long days spent on the hillsides, season him to the conditions of a hunter's life in a way nothing else will; and from the intimate knowledge those men acquire, who have been long among the various mountain tribes, of language, habits, and customs, they become very valuable in time of unrest when fighting is in the air, and as is usually the case in distant corners of our vast empire, there are but few at hand to control the disturbance or to understand its causes. Ladies have often accompanied these distant sporting expeditions, and have found plenty of work—securing food supplies, superintending the camp arrangements, mending, and washing—besides amusing themselves with a rifle when game was to be had within reasonable distance. Many women become very expert rifle shots when they can find scope for their skill without over-fatigue, a thing which seldom fails both to unsteady hand and eye.

To return to my march from Revel,—from a village about six miles beyond it, Gagangair, where the camping-ground even for Kashmir was unusually beautiful, the path began to ascend at times gently, at other points with a swiftness and abruptness

not a little disconcerting. The mountains were closing in on either side, and the whole character of the scenery changed, for the path rose gradually some five thousand feet in six miles. For the first three miles the Sind raced

Rocks and rapids near Sonamerg

along in its narrow bed with a wild fury that made its progress a succession of rapids; twisting, turning, tormenting, the tawny, foam-flecked waters hurled themselves along, sweeping in their wild career over stones

and along the steep banks, bearing in their course huge tree trunks like matchwood, and fed by countless mountain streams that in maddest fashion threaded as with lines of silver the dark pine forests—still frost-bound above, liberated below by the powerful spring sun—and bringing with them in their wild descent all boulders or blocks of wood that threatened to bar their way. From the path vast rocks rose precipitously, cutting the sky ten thousand feet above with their jagged edges, outer barriers of the huge barricade behind them, snowy monsters, the rivals of Haramuk and Kolahoi, whose heads showed at intervals between the nearer heights. Except in name the track was often non-existent, hidden at times under the blocks of huge moraines, swept away by the wild waters of the river that forced one to clamber through the flowery shrubs that formed the undergrowth of the dark forests of pine, whose gloom was only broken by vivid patches of young birches and walnuts just bursting into leaf. The scene would have been rugged to the point of desolation but for the saving grace of the flowers. Tufts of violets and saxifrages patched the ground with colour, and the dark glossy foliage of the laurels was relieved by flowering viburnums, graceful ferns, and some uncommon species of hazel. The roses and jessamines had been left behind after the second march, and all these had been cherished by the snow in the long winter months. It was a lonely path, the brightness of the early dawn had faded away, and there was a threatening of rain in the air which betokened fresh snow on the pass, a prospect to deter all possible pedestrians. During the later hours of my long march of twenty miles I only met one party of

coolies struggling up with a small supply of grain to the inhabitants of Sonamerg. In this solitude I found the visible signs of the telegraph, viz., the poles and wires, a great comfort. Very unlike the even regularity of the companies of message conductors so familiar on our roads and railways at home, these clambered about the hillside emulating the accomplishments of the giddy mountain goat, sometimes invisible while taking a short cut across the mountain tops, then reappearing passing through forest or over the great boulders of some huge moraine. I regretted their absence when out of sight, welcomed them back when they returned to my narrow path. It must have appeared a wellnigh impossible feat when it was first proposed to join the far-away British outpost of Gilgit with Leh and Srinagar, the awful winter tempests working deadly havoc on hillside and open merg; but the task has been accomplished with that kind of determination which seems to work blindly and inevitably whenever mind comes in contact with more natural obstacles, and in the loneliest marches I hardly felt cut off from the protection of the "Sirkar" when so close at hand was the medium of quick communication with the headquarters of that "raj," which, by its far-reaching power, permitted lonely wanderings through a country, for centuries the scene of wild disturbances and constant warfare.

My journey up was not to be accomplished without some excitements, for when within six miles of Sonamerg I found myself entering a region of deep-lying snows, a broken bridge over the Sind showed a thickness of nearly twelve feet, and had but recently been destroyed. It preluded the first of my difficulties, for a great sheet of snow many feet deep was lying right across the path,

cut off below by the wild waves of the stream. It stretched away above to a vast overhanging crag, the crown of the height I was crossing. Walking on snow in sandals has always its drawbacks, and when that walking means picking your way across a field lying at an angle of forty-five deg. with a drop of fifty feet, only bound by an uncomfortably rock-filled and bustling torrent, the disagreeables are multiplied. However, as there is no standing still in this world, I went on and found myself far too interested in testing the security of each foothold to trouble about what was below or behind. Safely landed on the further side after about two hundred yards of this slithering kind of marching, and having more or less dried my sandals, I moved on for further experiments, and realised soon that the morning would not be passed without even keener emotions. At one spot where the stream widened into a kind of pool, or rather "broad" of rocks, washed by a frenzy of foam-crowned, tumultuous waters, a huge snow heap barred the way. It had slipped bodily down the mountain side into the path, leaving no space between itself and the stream. As I approached, three men and two ponies were attempting to force their way through the tumult of waters. One pony, having lost its footing, had tried to mount a large boulder, and when I saw it it was feebly see-sawing backwards and forwards in imminent danger of slipping off into the deep holes on either side. Its owners were strong and active, and succeeded, after relieving it of its load, in leading, or rather half-carrying, it into more secure places. Watching them had neither helped nor encouraged me. The coolies signed to try their ponies, but the fate of their late loads had not

incited me to like methods, and I preferred clambering up my snow height, though digging inadequately shod toes into frozen snow is a slow method of making steps. I had arrived at a considerable height when I was unpleasantly surprised by a nasty crevasse! Not wide enough to have troubled a very moderate jumper under ordinary circumstances, it presented to me many difficulties. The "take-off" was considerably lower than the further side, with the additional difficulty of being on a considerable slope. I did not feel at all hopeful about anything. I wished dismally I had elected to end my days in any kind of an ordinary resting-place giving opportunities of sending last messages and final requests to a circle of sorrowing friends, instead of being hard-frozen like beef or mutton at the bottom of a snow block. I even wondered if my men would ever discover what had become of me, or if they would simply regard it as a matter of non-interference, the strange goings and comings of the "Sahib lôg" being beyond the province of a poor man to understand! Eventually, with a gasp and a valiant effort, I was across my "yawning chasm," and for the next mile found my path fairly easy, though the recent thaw made the security of a snow bridge rather doubtful. The stream, likewise, of course, the path, took an abrupt turn to the left, and I was in a region already touched with spring's life-giving hand. The merg, site of old Sonamerg, was all dotted with tiny flowers, the first crop after the melting of the snows. The Sind, now fallen into quieter methods, pursued its tranquil way between beds of white marsh marigolds, while on either side spread a carpet of tiny primulas, the *gagea lutea,* small fritillaries, gentians, a countless, brightly-clad host.

After crossing a bridge over the main stream the path, curving upwards, joined together two or three green terraces till the forest region was reached. Some way to the left below the forest could be seen the charred ruins of the old summer station, which once boasted a church and post office, besides various bungalows, but was totally destroyed by fire some years ago. The present camping-ground is some two miles beyond on an "upland green," from which the hills have receded on either side, leaving the river to make its way through a fairly broad valley. Dark clouds were hanging over the snow peaks, a chill breeze had sprung up and whistled with dismal threatening through the trees, many of which were still bare, as I made my way to the little village, where I thought it just possible I might find letters brought up from Srinagar by relays of swift runners. The scene was sadly desolate, grey skies above, grey waters below, and the moisture-laden atmosphere had changed the purity of the mountain's snowy dress to a like leaden hue. I was glad enough to reach the office of Her Majesty's mails, and to find folk who could understand lowland bàt (talk), for the hill folk I had been meeting had all strange lingos of their own. I found some notes, heard very dismal forecasts of the weather, and had the pleasure of looking through a small heap of letters which informed me by their addresses who were expected in this far-away centre of news. For the greater part they were for various sportsmen still camping on the heights beyond the Zogi Là shooting, and many of them had been waiting for months. It is a strange thing how soon we accustom ourselves to doing without what are usually considered necessaries. Talk to folk

at home of only getting letters once a fortnight and they will hold up their hands in horror at the notion of such outlandish arrangements, but once wander away in search of new interests and pursuits, and months without news of the outer world will scarcely seem a hardship. I learned that I was the only lady who had been up the valley that season. The snows were falling later than usual, and the occasional summer travellers had not thought of putting in an appearance. The postmaster warned me that the latest arrivals from the pass spoke of bad weather threatening, and advised me if I did not wish to have my camp bodily swept away to make everything very tight.

This I proceeded to see to, when late in the afternoon, after many difficulties, my baggage ponies arrived. The ground was much exposed, and the wind having risen to a tempest, with threatenings of snow, it was extremely difficult to pitch the tents. This, however, we eventually succeeded in doing, but a regular dinner was beyond the skill even of the faithful Assiza, though he managed to keep a fire lighted and to melt some good condensed soup I had, which, thickened with plenty of rice, formed an excellent supper. Then, rolling myself up in every available wrap, I turned in, a hot stone, which had served to shelter the fire, being brought close to the charpoy (bed) to keep my feet from getting numb. It was not a cheerful position, and the prospect of being snowed up is not a rosy one to a person always inclined to be chilly! About dawn the wind moderated, the temperature rose considerably, and the tent having quite decided to stand firm, I was able to get a good sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

> What, shall those flowers that deck'd thy garland erst,
> Upon thy grave be wastefully dispersed?
>
> —*T. Nash* (1595).

For the second time am turned back by snowy passes—My camp and I have a difference — Compensating circumstances—Hot march and a rose-strewn grave.

When, after several hours' sound sleep, I awoke, it was to find the earth clean, washed, and glistening in the warming sunlight, a deep blue sky overhead flecked with white clouds and cut by white peaks that, rising tier above tier like vast giants in serried ranges, stretched away on every side, cutting off the tiny green merg where I was resting from all contact with the outer world save by two precarious paths. The coolies, backed by the lambadar (village headman) resolutely refused to push on while the weather was so uncertain. Heavy snow was reported as having fallen during the night in the Zogi Là, and they determined that it would be risking too much to attempt its passage. I regretted much not being able to cross the pass, but snowstorms are inconvenient things and liable to prevent all locomotion, and they certainly stop most effectually all distant prospects. So as time was some object, and I had no

wish to remain weather-bound in an inadequate hut, I decided to march some eight miles towards Baltal, returning the same day to my own camp, and if the weather still looked threatening, to return down the valley. My men had already begun to strike their own tents, hoping to be off speedily to warmer regions, and prophesied dire disaster as the result of my determination to march on; but as Kashmiris are arrant cowards

Huts and Bridge near the Zogi La

where the weather is concerned, and will swear to any statement likely to assist them in a speedy return to their own homes, I stuck to my point, and, hung about with almost as many implements as the "White Knight," I started on my expedition, some provisions in a small satchel, painting materials in one large pocket of my flapping coat, tin box for flowers in the other, a long-

pointed stick, and a thick coat strapped across my back. The sun was at first so warm that my impedimenta were rather a trial, but the path was easy through gently undulating grasslands, dotted about with countless snow primulas, anemones, and in sheltered spots the pretty spotted kumaon iris, and fritillaries. Peacefully the Sind pursued its way, its waters a milky blue from the melted snows that had joined its stream.

The huge snow bridges had in places been broken through; in others they were still standing—solid piles, twenty to forty feet deep. From here, while they are still passable, there is a possible route to the famous Amarnath, a sacred place of pilgrimage where the god Siva is worshipped with many curious rites by such pilgrims as are able to brave the difficulties of the path and reach the frozen cave, a journey that can only be accomplished for a very short period each summer. The partial thawing of the previous week, together with the threatening of further heavy snows, prevented any attempt on my part, and I continued my way. Small parties of Baltis with ponies passed me. They were clad in the usual grim uniform of puttoo, enlivened only by bunches of mauve primulas in their caps, the hair frizzed out on either side of the face. I inquired how far they had come. They stared. I repeated the same question in slightly varied phrases. Again the same result. Then I pointed out what I considered excellent mimetic action, and they understood me to ask for something to eat. Then I waved my hand in the direction of Baltal and the Zogi Là, and asked, "Much snow?" This time they concluded I was inquiring the future state of the weather, and answered something about "warojah" and "shin" (much snow),

and gazed at the sky, so I knew they were prophesying another downfall. It was hopeless to make them understand more, so we sat down and smiled at one another. I regretted their "local" odour, but admired the "local colour" of their appearance, and finally sketched them, as I thought it likely the former would leave a stronger impression on my memory than the latter! The path continued with the same varied scenery on either side, sometimes grassy meadows, sometimes forest lands, always rising slightly, so that two miles before Baltal I was at an elevation of over eleven thousand feet.

Again the early brightness had passed away, and covered with a dull weight of grey mist there was an unpleasantly leaden look in the clouds. The wind had a whistling sound, and very regretfully I turned away from the Zogi Là pass, and took my way campwards. In this world it is always the garden on the other side of the wall that holds out such attractive prospects, so with the vast wall of rock before me I felt convinced that could I once reach its summit, prospects far more beautiful than any I had yet seen would be opened before me. I comforted myself with the assurance that the dishes when tasted seldom were equal to their titles on the bill of fare, and that it was only too probable that the heights above Baltal reached, there would be little to reward my searching gaze. In imagination I could realise the giant peaks on every side. Far to the west great Nanga Parbat, nigh twenty-seven thousand feet, its huge head supported on two vast shoulders, king of the thousand heights that lie around him in wild tumbled confusion. Nearer Haramuk, ten thousand feet lower, its crest covered with snow save for one short week in the year, and crowned, so the

legend runs, with an emerald, the glow of whose green rays will give for ever relief from the most dangerous snake bite. To the south Mahadeo, sacred mountain, much revered by Hindus, and far away hemming in the Happy Valley on the southern side the far-stretching range of the Pir Panjâl, truly mighty barricades, each "pir" (peak) the centre of innumerable stories and traditions, half-worshipped by the country folk for its size and aloofness, consulted by them with anxious prayer as the seat of an incorruptible oracle as the time of harvest approaches and signs of the weather are wanted. Baltal itself is a mere collection of huts, and from them the real ascent of the pass, the scene in the Middle Ages of a great fight, when the Drasmen fought their best, but in vain, to prevent the Yarkandi invaders entering and wintering in Kashmir.

My return to camp was a slow progress, so many tiny flowers were springing up taking possession of the earth on the retreat of the snows, armies of bright primulas, spotted irises, small members of the lily clan, whose examination would well repay the "earnest botanist." My men I met on the road, being anxious lest I should be overtaken by the storm that seemed imminent, and my supper was again an affair of "holding hard and eating fast," as the wind struggled with the guy ropes and made incursion as the flap was opened to allow ingress.

At midnight the wind sank and the moon rose, casting an unearthly radiance over sloping grassland and snowy heights. The small native village was hidden from my sight by the sheltering high ground behind it, and my men had wandered off as the weather improved to have a "crack" with chums

View on the road to the Zogi La

down in the huts, probably to work up another conspiracy to influence my speedy departure, and I felt curiously aloof from all and everything that was not part of the surrounding scene. The snows were sisters, the moon's soft radiance an especial protection, the past had slipped away, the future could never be a reality, silence, shadow, sadness, solitude, intense pleasure—they were the sum of existence; all else were but the whirling figures on a stage called by its puny players the world—something from which I was cut off remote. The moon waned, the stars shone out relieved of the burden of the brighter light, the dawn, with fine-drawn net, drew them from the sky, and a light breeze whispered that the sun would soon be back to take up again his sovereignty and heal all dreamers with the touch of his prosaic light. The night was passed, and a servant with dismal whine proclaimed that food for breakfast there was none; the "presence" must march quickly to reach less "jungly" places, or starvation would be her lot. Even this threat did not produce consternation; rice and "kultchas" (native cakes made of flour and ghi—oiled butter) are extremely satisfying, and always to be obtained at native villages. I had some tea, and when two eggs were also produced I felt that pedestrian could not desire more.

I marched to Revel that day—further than I intended, for I had told my men to stop at Gagangair, as I wished to leave the direct way at various points to look for flowers, thereby considerably lengthening the thirteen miles. I found the track a good deal easier than when I had come up two days before, the snow being harder, the river less inclined to break its bounds, but the crevasse on the

snow mound remained, and, in fact, had widened, but jumping down has not the terrors of the reverse movement. For many miles there was nothing of great interest to note, but so many days of marching were beginning to tell, and I found the last mile or two into Gagangair very long. To my dismay and annoyance, when I arrived at that beautiful camping-ground, expecting a rest under the shade of its magnificent walnuts, not a sign of my camp was to be seen—my men had passed me early in the day when I was flower-hunting. A sleepy coolie dragged himself up out of a hut and remarked that he had been left behind to show the Sahib the rest of the way, as they had gone on to Revel, knowing I should like that ground best. Well did I understand their little trick. Afraid that if they remained behind to consult me as to my wishes they would be ordered to stay at Gagangair, they had pushed on to Revel, having heard probably that some other camp was there, for, above all things, a native loves society. I was in a dilemma, for if I did not weakly give in, but held out and satisfied myself that I was showing moral strength, the probabilities were that I might have many hours to wait before my things arrived, and there would be no dinner procurable. So, most reluctantly, I put my pride in my pocket, and tried to march on the least used-up portions of my very weary feet; but I wondered whether six miles had ever been so long drawn out, though luckily, for a greater part of the way, the track was beautifully shaded by trees, and though rough, not too much on the lines of a switchback, the general slope descending. Some roses had appeared to add their decorating graces since I had last passed, and there was a promise in the air of

summer. Already Sonamerg was more than two thousand feet above, and every yard brought nearer the gay blossoms and balmier airs of the lower valley.

My guess was proved to be correct by the appearance of various tents at the mouth of the Revel nullah, but the ready appearance of tea on my arrival, and the whisper that the Miss Sahib's bath was prepared, weakened my stern resolve, and soothed my ruffled temper so much as to make a very severe lecture an impossibility, and when rested and refreshed, it was some pleasure to "pass the time of day" with fellow-wanderers, hear where they had been and what they were doing, and find that two of the party were old friends. They were on shooting intent, and hoped to add to their already fairly good bag of bear—the ripening of the mulberries bringing Bruin out of his ordinary high lairs in search of such delightful tit-bits—and they intended to delay their progress to higher regions till fine weather was more certain. A pleasant evening round a fire, good-nights in the open under the star-lit sky, and the party broke up, I to turn in and rest, so as to be ready for an early start. By half-past five I was again on the road, the camp looking very quiet after the bustle of the previous evening, for the sportsmen were already away in the dark for a difficult stalk to a distant height, and the ladies were not yet ready for their morning outing, though I saw the syces rubbing down the hardy, sure-footed hill ponies they habitually used on the rough tracks, gaining such confidence in their mounts that they even ventured across the rickety swinging bridges, feeling certain that if there was danger the "tàts" (ponies) would be the first to perceive it.

The weather became oppressively hot as the hours wore on, and vast herds of ponies were continually passing me on their way up to the higher pasturage. Pony-breeding is a great industry in Kashmir, and there is a constant demand for them in large quantities for the distant journeys to Gilgit and Leh. Numbers are bred on the shores of the Wular, where the rich marsh grasses afford good food, but these have a tendency to become soft-footed, and the village ponies of the Sind and Lidar valleys are preferred by the native dealers, markbans, who collect and sell them. His Highness the Maharajah owns many herds, as well as horses of larger breeds. Only lately the Government has had to thank this prince for his generous offer of mounts for our army in South Africa. Personally, though quite pleased that the country should possess so many ponies, I would have preferred that special paths should have been made for them. With rocks on one side, and the river hemming one in on the other, it is not easy to pass some hundreds of kicking, bucking, squealing little gees, who have apparently no idea of manners saving the hopping over any obstacle that presents itself, and as their keepers—"galawans" they are called—are seldom immediately in attendance but are straying behind, gossiping and smoking, some skill and more agility has to be exercised to prevent being stamped out and left to fertilise the soil. I found the bank broken away at the same place as when I had passed up the valley, and at first no means of crossing the "tumultuous deep" presented itself, but an old coolie wandering by suggested his broad shoulders as a good mount, and so I clambered up, and therefore, hardly as steady as my salt-laden tàt, who had borne me over the first time,

I was taken, after various slips and jolts, and deposited in safety. "Where is the Sahib's pony?" questioned my Charon. "Shanks' mare" as an expression does not exist, so far as I know, in either Hindustani or Kashmiri, but he took in my methods of travel, and his eyes rolled and his hands were held up in astonishment—"To Baltal and back, to Islamabad, and beyond, and walking, surely this is a marvel," and a friend who happened to come by was enlightened as to my extraordinary proceedings. "Truly, truly, the ways of the Sahib lôg are beyond comprehension," was their only comment. A Kashmiri, when obliged, will march the most wonderful distances, often with a heavy load on his back, but the moment he is able, a pony is purchased for twenty to sixty rupees, and never again, unless driven by some untoward fate, will he use his own two feet for journeys.

By two o'clock I had reached the shady camping-ground at Kangan, and found my tent under a glorious walnut tree, plentifully decorated with mistletoe, so fine and green that it would have made the fortune of a flower shop later in the year. The day was young, but I had travelled more than seventeen miles since the dawn, and I felt I could allow myself an easy afternoon, so I rested lying under the great shady trees, lulled to a pleasant drowsiness by the myriad-voiced life all around—gilded dragon flies, fluttering butterflies, and golden-winged bees passed on their way full of energy in the revivifying sunshine; birds trolled out gay roundelays; through all was the deeper note of the rushing stream speaking to the flower-decked banks, gaily garrulous after the months of enforced silence amid the vast snow stretches from which it was but lately freed.

As the afternoon wore away a pleasant coolness replaced the earlier heat, and the soft light of stars began to shine out from the soft, dark sky. I heard the sad, monotonous tones of a native voice singing at some distance. I started out, and, following the direction of the sound, came to a small Mahomedan burying-place. The great blue iris, always planted by them over the graves of their loved ones, had finished flowering, and walking round the little mounds was a tall, bowed figure in the Pathan dress and cap, sprinkling rose petals over them. Slowly he threw the handfuls of sweet-scented leaves, and as he threw he chanted in saddest tones—

Oh, stars that shine in this dear spot I love,
  And shine alike on heav'n's distant gates,
Send from your calm serenity above
  Sleep t' him, whom, sleepless here, despairing waits.

Broken, forlorn, upon the desert sand
  That sucks these tears, and utterly abased,
Looking across the lonely, level land
  With thoughts more desolate than any waste.

Planets that shine on what I so adore
  Now laid for ever here in silent rest,
Protect that sleep, which I may watch no more,
  I the forsaken, left, and dispossessed.

Loved with a love beyond all words or sense,
  Lost with a grief beyond the saltest tear.
So lovely, so removed, remote, and hence
  So doubly and so desperately dear.

Stars! from your skies so purple and so calm,
  That through the centuries your secrets keep,
Send to this worn-out heart some soothing balm,
  Send me, for many nights so sleepless, sleep.

And ere the sunrise on this valley jars
My sense with sorrow and another day—
Through your soft magic, oh, my silver stars,
Turn sleep to death in your own loving way.

The petals were finished, the song closed, the sad singer moved silently away among the deepening shadows, alone with his great sorrow, leaving the beloved spot in the safe keeping of the silver stars. A woman who had been crouching over a tiny heap that covered probably some small life mourned and remembered only by herself, rose to go. "Who was the singer?" I questioned. She shrugged her shoulders. "How should I say; he came from another country, far away among other hills; he does not know our speech; we do not understand his; he came with a Sahib; but loving a girl of this village, he stayed here, and then she died, and he now lives alone, and sings, and sprinkles flowers; that is all." With another shrug of impatience at such peculiarities she moved away. Truly, our own sorrows do not always unlock the springs of sympathy for others' griefs.

CHAPTER IX

What is so sweet and dear
As a prosperous morn in May,
The confident prime of the day,
And the dauntless youth of the year,
When nothing that asks for bliss,
Asking aright is denied;
And half of the world a bridegroom is,
And half of the world a bride?

—*W. Watson.*

A long, hot march, mitigated by many flowers and mulberries—I am offered food, mental and physical, by a holy man—Rice growing, and the benefits of widowhood—The knife that was lost is found, and my crew rejoice.

After my easy afternoon at Kangan I was ready to start extremely early for one of the longest marches that I accomplished while in Kashmir. I believed that sixteen miles would have brought me to the Manasbal Lake, but twenty-two was nearer the correct distance, and that was the length given by the natives, who seldom over-estimate marches. The first miles were passed over rapidly on paths among glorious thickets of the great yellow jessamine that filled the air with its heavy sweetness, and bushes of hamamelis, while a rich undergrowth of myriad-tinted roses scented the air with their fresh aromatic smell, as different from

Sind Valley near Pron

the perfume of the garden rose at home as were its sharp, deep colours from those we are accustomed to. The villages I passed were shaded, almost hidden, by the huge trees planted round, the brimij (*Celtis australis*), walnut, chenaar, all attaining mammoth proportions. At a lovely spot, Pron, I finally left the track by which I had gone up the valley, and took the direct road to my destination, the little mountain tarn of Manasbal, and before long reached a flourishing village. Mangan I found to be its name. Then seating myself under some splendid mulberry trees, and eating eagerly of the fine white fruit handed to me in a large leaf by a native, I inquired how much further was Manasbal. He looked aghast. "Far, very far; a day's march; six coss round the mountain that stretches out into the valley there, as far as a man can see, and then up over a hill." This was not encouraging, the day was very warm, and after my sojourn in the snows I was feeling the close air of the low valley very trying. The track, too, that was pointed out wound along beside a shadeless canal. Mulberries would be procurable, but though refreshing for the moment, their over-luscious sweetness soon cloys, and the thirsty traveller prefers the discomfort of dust-clogged mouth to the nausea produced by them. Fortunately, they never weary the native apparently, or luckily his ox and his ass, to say nothing of the bears that abound in his hills, or the mahseers (finest fish in India) that inhabit his rivers. As twelve miles had to be traversed before I could hope for rest and drinks, I concluded to try and get them done as soon as possible, and moved on, after visiting the beautiful village ziarat (shrine), a square, wooden building of deepest-

coloured walnut woods, the shutters of finely-carved work, and surmounted by a strange earthenware ornament with tassels and bells at the corner, the roof crowned with a field of white iris (a near relative of the *S. florentina*), and the whole sheltered with bushes of flaming pomegranate.

It was a weary, flat walk amid irrigated fields and rough pastures, broken sometimes by the vineyards that the State has done so much to foster. In olden times Kashmir had been famous for its grapes, but through laziness, or the exorbitant exactions of officials, they had fallen out of cultivation, and only the wild plant was seen clambering over fences or throwing graceful arms round the tall poplars. Then the late Maharajah, the good Ranbir Singh, wishing to assist his people by every means in his power, introduced vines from France, and for a time they did fairly well; but the dreaded phylloxera made its appearance, and new vines from America had to be introduced. At present the State vineyards are under the charge of some Italian gentlemen, and very well they fulfil their charge, and yearly large quantities of Barsac and Medoc, as well as apple brandy, are produced, and though the flavour is still a little rough, they are good strengthening wines, and at the rate of about one rupee for a quart bottle will create a large demand. Transport is the chief difficulty, for under present conditions of road traffic it does not pay to send them out of the valley scarcely even any distance from Srinagar. That hot morning in early May I regretted hugely that there were only leaves on the vines, and so exhausting was the steamy air from the swampy irrigated rice fields that I felt like an imperfectly washed and unstarched

flannel, and could barely cast even one admiring look on the various pretty flowers that I found growing.

Directly I began to ascend, pedicularis of peculiarly soft shades of mauve, pink and white; tiny pink and white dianthus; roses, and small honeysuckles were constant companions. It was nearly two o'clock before I saw below me the blue waters of Manasbal, a mirror of strange power, giving an added brilliance to everything reflected in it, a piece of heaven's blue retaining some threads of the gold with which that master craftsman, the sun, points his dwelling. It was good enough after the long stretch of eight hours to rest by a stream under the shade of great chenaars and watch the cool waters and the brilliant birds darting about as fearless as if the millennium had come with its reign of universal peace. Three kingfishers, like fleeting jewels, came and perched close beside me, a living mosaic, and the cuckoos and the larks trilled and called, hiding their plainer coats away out of sight, leaving to the silent but gaudy-clothed ones the display of bright plumes. This little lake is scarcely two miles long, but it is very beautiful in its loneliness among the great hills that throw their outlines on its waters and shut out from it the wild, rough winds that sweep down the exposed valleys. All around the slopes are cut into great terraces, relics of the days of Jehangir and his gay garden makers. Only the solid parts of this work remain, flower beds, fountains, pleasances having passed away like the fair ones who made them, and the masonry of the terraces and the huge trees they planted are the only signs of those summers, centuries ago, when the Moguls and their followers sought rest in the Happy Valley, forgetting while there the weariness

of statecraft and the ceaseless strain of a great empire.

While waiting beside the spring I had found, slaking my thirst there, and drowsily watching the swift flight of the kingfishers, a native boy approached, and with many salaams offered for my acceptance a basket of fresh fruits and dûn (walnuts), with much pride pointing out the "gilas" (cherries), the very first that had ripened. With the fruits was a bunch of roses and "mogra" flowers (jessamine, used throughout India as a symbol of welcome or affection); these he gave, with a message from his master, a pious fakir, that he would like a visit from the Huzur. As my men were apparently lingering trying the pipes of all their acquaintances in the various villages they passed, I thought it best to make use of the fruits to stave off the pangs of hunger, and to fill up time went down to see the kindly sender. He proved a charming old man, dwelling with much content in a largish cave beside the lake, a well-filled garden surrounding his abode. He was used to visitors, and seemed happy and sociable, but when I asked him certain questions that always interest me, and which, I think, are more likely to be known to those lonely seekers after knowledge than to others, he shook his head sadly. "In the time I have learnt much, known much, but then I was solitary and silent. As the time draws near for me to know Siva (god of death, and therefore, according to Hindu teaching, god of new life), I seek to know this world well, and its dwellers, my brethren, and I talk to travellers of their countries; and it may be that when I am young again my mind will work as in old days, and I shall take part in the secrets of the mighty ones. Read, think, learn, but rewards

come only to those who dig deeply; for the majority, wealth and rank are suitable and sufficient returns for their works"; and then, with something of scorn for the superficial Westerner wishing the secret of the universe

A charming old man

in a nutshell, he quoted the words of a song usually sung in another sense—

> But thou, alas! what can I do for thee?
> By fate and thine own birth, set above
> The need of all or any aid from me,
> Too high for service, what shall my words prove?

I made a suitable return for the apt advice I had received, and not being much advanced by it as to the things of other worlds, I turned myself to the comforts of this one, hurried my men, who had at last arrived, and before the afternoon had waned I was bathed, fed, and refreshed. Then I wandered round the shores of the lake, beautifully shaded by huge trees, and watched the great mountains looking at themselves in the mirror at their feet as the setting sun illumined their sides with a thousand different colours.

I saw large parties of Sepoys enjoying their leave by feasting hugely on the quantities of mulberries that lined every watercourse and road, taking great care the while not to let the juice stain their spotless white "mufti," and finally, having found a comfortable seat, watched the children in long, low, flat-bottomed boats collecting the harvest of the lake, for, of the many plants that grow in these hill tarns, there are but few that cannot be made use of either for food or fodder for the cattle. Of the former, the singhara, "water chestnut," is the most important, but the *nymphæa stellata*, and the roots of the reed mace are also used, and both nuts and stem of the lotus are considered delicacies. These latter were not yet out; they are hardly in beauty till July; but a variety of tiny white and yellow blooms were showing, and the handsome, prickly, red-brown leaves of a begonia-like plant added their tints to the bright mosaic of colour. I had wandered many miles before the moon rose, and before returning to my tents I strolled to the other side of the sheet of water to visit a curious submerged temple, apparently of the same type as so many in this country, but as little remained visible save the gabled stone roof,

it was more curious than interesting. When I climbed the terraces to my halting-place the moon was playing Paul Pry among the trees, sending inquiring beams among the dark stems touching the pointed roof of the little temple with gentle hand as in benediction as the fast-vanishing symbol of old-time faith, and casting a silver radiance on the bubbling waters of the spring where I had rested in the morning.

I found a fine supper spread for me beneath the trees; my men had not forgotten that they had not been quite forgiven for the changing of the camping-ground two days before, and evidently believed in an appeal to my gentler feelings by some tempting dishes easier to prepare, with a variety of fruits and vegetables to draw on, than away in the infertile valley; besides these, a large cake and a huge loaf of sweetened bread adorned my groaning board. Knowing that I possessed neither portable oven nor cake tin, I felt it only wise to observe discretion in my inquiries, feeling sure that the larger resources of my neighbour's camp in the Revel nullah had been requisitioned. However, I was large-minded—and hungry—enough to allow the offerings to work the desired result, though I knew well that their object would not absolve me from a fine bill for butter, eggs, and the nasty little black currants that my man could not persuade himself to leave unused, though I always carefully picked them out as my offering, according to Hindu custom, for the chance guest, on these occasions generally birds. During the foregoing seven days I had walked on an average about nineteen and a half miles a day, my longest march being twenty-two, which, added to an afternoon stroll of five miles, made a

respectable twenty-seven in twenty-four hours, and I felt myself entitled to a "day off," so it was arranged that I should start early, the track being shadeless almost the entire way, and after reaching Ganderbal, eight miles distant, rest, or rather attend to writing, mending, and such like uninteresting details that are more or less necessary after a sojourn in the wilds. Before six I had had my early cup of tea and was ready to be off, passing out of sight of the pretty little Manasbal as I reached the edge of the cup-like ridge that divides it from the adjoining lands. The ground was starred with soft little pink and white dianthus, and great was the pride of a handsome native woman when I permitted her two toddling bairns to assist me in making up a bunch of them. Then we walked together some way, she carrying the babies, alternately teasing them with fine large mulberries which she held to their expectant lips and then quickly withdrew as they eagerly essayed to snatch them. It was a pretty scene, and I regretted when they strayed behind in a pretty, deeply-shaded village.

I was obliged to push on across the steamy rice fields, where the men were working at the first kushàba knee-deep in the slimy water-covered ooze. This kushàba is a curious process peculiar to the culture of rice, a grain that involves an enormous amount of labour from the time it is sown in April till, ripe and golden, it is cut and garnered in September. First the soil is prepared by being made very dry or very wet, according to the method preferred by the cultivator. That generally adopted is the dry, and when the ground has been ploughed it is then moistened for the sowing. As a rule the seed is scattered directly on

Reaping in Kashmir

the fields, but some prefer to rear the young plants in nurseries. When the plants begin to grow, then is the time for the cultivator to show his skill, for this kushàba is no ordinary weeding. With hands or feet, preferably the former, each plant has to be felt, distinguished from weeds or false rice, as the spurious varieties are called, and packed as close together as possible. Sometimes the entire crop is uprooted and replanted, and one man at least must be continually on the watch till the plants are sufficiently strong to fight their own battles, so fast-growing and choking are the weeds. No one not trained to this species of mud larks from their earliest days can hope to excel, and none need expect to escape from lumbago, the sure result of standing for hours in icy water and insufficient clothes. Three times has this process of weeding and pulling up the crop to be gone through, and a man had better not be beguiled by the large returns of a successful rice harvest into attempting to cultivate it unless possessed of a waterproof skin, web feet, a double-hinged back, and perfect sight and touch wherewith to detect the slightest variation of leaf, the only outward difference in the young plants between the good and the useless.

Even when swamped with greatest care and scuffled with skilful fingers, fatal disease often destroys the labour of two spring months. "Rai" works great havoc, and is as mysterious in its origin as peculiar in its cures. Of these I had an example, for, as I was resting, hat in hand, under a solitary chenaar that sentineled a great terrace of fields, a native inquired if I were alone. "No," I replied, not understanding the drift of his question, and as one at home might answer, "I am waiting for the policeman," and added, "My camp is just

behind." My questioner, whose face had fallen somewhat, cheered up again. "Nay, I would ask if the Sahib's husband is with her?" "No," I replied. In these countries one does not acknowledge to non-possession of such things. "I had hoped," he explained, "seeing the Huzur alone and without her hat that she might be a widow; it would then have benefited us greatly if she would have walked uncovered across the fields, seeing we are attacked by the life-destroying 'rai.'" It was a pity that my "state" prevented me from proving the value of this prescription, and I was sorry to disappoint the anxious labourer.

The Kashmiris are great connoisseurs in rice, and even while in leaf they will distinguish between the sixty odd varieties grown in the valley, and when well enough off to do so, will be as particular as to the sort they prefer for their food, as they are knowing in their choice of drinking water. The red varieties are decorative in cooking, but not so good as the white, and there are an infinity of degrees in both. By nine o'clock I had rejoined my doonga, which had been swept and garnished in my absence and decorated by a passing friend with beautiful fresh iris, and had sent a man off across the fields to the queer wooden hut on stilts, added to keep the living rooms (dens would be a more appropriate word) above the winter floods, which proclaimed by a scarlet sign — symbol of Her Imperial Majesty's mails all the empire over—that letters were there to be obtained. As a huge pile was my spoil, the afternoon soon passed without any excitement, save that procured from the search for my small table knife that had been shaken overboard with the crumbs after breakfast. Knowing its value, I suggested that it should

be left to its oozy bed, but my boatman kindly wished to do a good turn to the villagers, and demanded that they should search for it. As he was responsible for its loss, I suggested that he should reward them. This, he answered with pride, would not be suitable in a class of establishment such as mine, so for half an hour shining "brown torsos" bobbed up and down, looking like a shoal of porpoises. Advice was shouted from the bank, spluttering were heard from below the waters, two small fishes were caught by lithe fingers amid great rejoicings; finally, my knife appeared, and twice its value was distributed in backsheesh for its recovery!

CHAPTER X

Hurrah for the storm-clouds sweeping!
Hurrah for the driving rain!
The dull earth out of her sleeping
Is wakened to life again.

—*Will Ogilvie.*

Of waves and whirlwinds—A lake with many flowers, narrow waterways, and fair women—Return to civilisation and green vegetables.

If the day had passed quietly the night was to be full of emotions. When I went to bed the sky looked clear. We were securely tied up in a good position for an early start next morning, and I turned in, leaving on my table my finished letters to be posted in Srinagar, and a *chef d'œuvre* in the way of a freshly-trimmed hat, wherewith to make my entry into the capital, for even in Kashmir woman's natural vanity is not entirely killed. About one o'clock a strange sound filled the air, and I had hardly quite roused myself from sleep when the cries of my men, "Tufán" (whirlwind), "tufán is on us," mingling with the roar of the sudden storm, restored me to full consciousness. Through the length of the boat rushed the wind, tearing away supports, pulling at the "chuppars," for all had been left open because of the

heat. The boat swayed, straining at her ropes, and in one second, in spite of wild efforts to save my most precious belongings, lamp, papers, jacket, and new hat were all overboard, blown, by the one piece of good luck that came to me that night, on the land side, where the majority of my effects were retrieved from the muddy bank. The men made great efforts to get the boat away from the open spot where she had been trying to shelter further up the little stream, but torn forward by the fierce tufán their strength was powerless against such might, and it seemed an even chance whether the boat would bodily upset or be saved by the rending away of its coverings that were making it so top-heavy. As suddenly as it had risen the wind went down once more, the boat was towed to safer quarters, and further sleep seemed possible. Just as we were settling ourselves for this there was a shout from a boat above us, and once more the tufán was buffeting us about. This time all was taut, chuppars fast closed, ropes firm, and the boat merely swayed in her efforts to swing with the fierce current. In spite of the increased security I thought it best to be ready for a swift departure if anything untoward should take place, and, wrapped in my puttoo cloak, I lay in the well of the boat outside the tightly-fastened straw sides and waited. The first grey light of the dawn was stealing into the sky, sending feeble gleams through the torn grey clouds, hurrying across the heavens at the mercy of the terrible agent of destruction that had worked such havoc on us. Wild shrieks arose from the tormented trees, and were answered by the fierce roar of the waters tumbled into a great foam-crowned wall that hurtled through the

broken spans of the old bridge. Strange voices filled the air, yelling to the demons of the stream, and the quiet night was transformed into pandemonium. Dark shadows passed rapidly across the low-lying fields, terrified flocks of ponies fleeing for shelter to the village looked like grim wraiths, the wind rolled the vaporous mist across the open, and then the whole world was blotted out in an unnatural wall of dark cloud, and I felt myself the only living thing in the world whirling to destruction.

Slowly the minutes sped their way, the burden of the sad surroundings oppressed us with a heavy weight, useless to guess what was taking place a few yards away, hopeless to try and assist others who might be even in worse plight than myself; heavily, drearily time passed waiting for the sun to rise again and light the stricken scene. The second storm had lasted far longer than the first, and the wind had only just ceased its wild cries and menaces when the sun rose with stormy splendour, and a ravaged world slowly began to settle to a day of salvage and re-adjustment. Anxious as I was to reach Srinagar before the evening, having an important engagement there, I hardly dared to suggest a start in face of the possibility of a repetition of the night's storm, for there was a long stretch of low, unsheltered meadows, and then the open Anchar Lake to cross, before I could reach the safety of the narrow city waterways. Earth and sky were strangely blended together in a veil of vapour that moved in layers, ragged and broken at the edges over the marsh lands, forming fantastic figures, or combining to screen with thick mist all outlook. Though the sky was still threatening there had been no repetition of the storm

by breakfast time, and I made up my mind to risk moving rather than waste another day amid such uninteresting surroundings, and ordered my men to start. This they were most loth to do. The Kashmiris are proverbially the most cowardly watermen in the world, the want of keels to their boats increasing their sense of insecurity in the always uncertain weathers on their lakes. For some time they refused to stir, and it was only my threat of sending a telegram to Srinagar to order another boat to convey me and my belongings that brought them to their senses, and at last, the men having securely fastened all loose gear, tied firmly the chuppars, and taking two extra men on board, we commenced our slow progress down. The all-enveloping, vapoury mist, as if torn from its parent cloud, left floating overhead by the stern power of the wind, moved on with us, cutting us off from all the world. I could scarcely see the men towing on the bank; I was a pilgrim in the land of shadows, ferried by an invisible Charon! When we reached the Anchar Lake the weather had improved, the sky was brighter, and the sun was reasserting its sway, dragging up to his court again the mass of cloud that had been an unwilling visitor of our cold climes, and though I knew the men were nervous by the desperately brisk way they threw themselves on to the paddles, I did not fear any further storm for the time being. However, I was glad of the spur to their energies, and the quick motion was soothing as I lay back noting the countless flowers that ornamented this pretty marshy swamp. White water lilies, like queens at their ease, floated amid their dark foliage, a host of tall forget-me-nots waited, courtier-wise, upon them, while pretty white arrowheads, always a little anxious and

stricken-looking, by reason of the militant appearance of their attendant greenery, waited round; the red leaves of the singara spread out, rosette-wise, above the growing nuts, and a perfect mosaic of minute pink, white, and yellow blooms were also there. Fortune favoured us, for we were well across the open water and some way up a narrow waterway, under shelter of some thick willows, before the next storm broke. This time the wind was not nearly so violent as on former occasions, but the rumblings of the thunder were almost deafening and unceasing, for before the vast amphitheatre of hills that stands guardian on this side of Srinagar had done taking up and repeating each tremendous clap, a deeper roar told that a new one was breaking. The sky became intensely dark, the jagged lightning showing vistas of bending, labouring trees that creaked as the whistling gusts passed through them, against a distant background of dark hills and jagged peaks. Then the rain fell in sheets, smacking the water with a sound of small shot, and when that last venture of the storm gods had been exhausted, we pursued a fairly tranquil way, moving through the narrow, dark tracks of the Mar Nullá.

In places the houses on either side almost touched, leaving barely space for the boat to be dragged through; sometimes there were sharp corners where a collision with another boat was difficult to avoid; always there was somewhat of interest to note, for we were literally passing through the "courts of the people," and Kashmirian home life is a peculiarly open and simple thing. The houses are all high, and as the use of glass for windows is unknown, they employ pretty wooden shutters, carved *au jour*, which same *jour* is carefully

excluded during the cold months by a liberal use of newspapers fastened over the openings. Most of the people can boast some little greenery, a prettily-covered bower, a few plants of pomegranate, or a bed of portulacas, or stocks which are grown on the roof, in a balcony, or just above the water in the small, unevenly paved courts, of which most of the

Flower-covered roofs, Srinagar

houses can boast. At intervals there would be a small Mahomedan mosque of the usual ziarat form, with square walls of rich, dark wood, more or less carved, and pointed roof adorned literally with cap and bells, for the overhanging points are always finished with tassels of wood and tiny brass bells, and most could

boast a fine terra cotta ornament placed hat-wise on the high wooden pinnacle. Less often there was a Hindu temple, low, square, of stone, with sloping tower over the shrine, decorated with all the glories of tinfoil.

In these poor quarters of the city the great majority of the people are Mahomedans, and may be distinguished by various peculiarities of dress from the Hindus, the one wearing the pâgri rolled one way, and the other the contrary, but the most notable characteristics are personal ones, the Hindus, who belong generally to the ruling Dogra race, showing all the favourable features of the old hill tribes. They have a fair skin, clear-cut features, and well-bred air, and the women think more of their costume than their Mahomedan sisters, and have adopted the becoming fashion of wearing pherans (the universal "frock") of brilliant colours, the bright purples, blues, oranges suiting well their complexion, while the white head-dress worn flatly folded and fastened round the neck in broad pleats gives a pleasant, dainty, nun-like finish to the costume entirely lacking in the prosaic, undyed puttoo of the Mussulman's covering. Many of these Hindu women are very handsome, their open brows, soft eyes, straight noses, and oval faces reminding one of the ideal Roman type. The open-air life they lead helps to make them strong and straight, and in the city they have not the crushing manual labour which in the country ages them before their time and withers their early freshness and beauty.

On the whole, they have easy, pleasant lives. Kashmiris seldom marry more than one wife, and, as a rule, are kind and affectionate, and a Kashmiri baby is a thing to soften the hardest

heart. Groups of adoring parents are generally to be seen of an evening commenting on the latest prodigies performed by the chubby little orange-skinned "butchas" as their fond mothers teach them their first lessons in bathing, or, if the water is too cold for these aquatic performances so dear to all denizens of the Happy Valley, they are sprinkled with the chilly liquid while a surrounding crowd admires the shiverings and shudderings and other signs of fear of the little ones. So many strange ceremonies attend the entrance into the world of Hindu boys that it would be easy to believe that they were hardened for ever after to curious and trying performances. So many unfavourable circumstances, too, surround their youth, the survival of the fittest is so obviously the law of the land, that it might be expected that the Kashmiri would grow up a very hardy and brave creature. However, the chroniclers of the country and its folk do not give them a good character in this respect, and nearly all historians speak with the utmost contempt of the Kashmiri, perhaps forgetting that men, when neither educated nor travelled, seldom show great valour under new circumstances, and that in facing the dangers of his own valley and such things as he has comprehension of—fording stormy torrents, disentangling and floating the great blocks of wood—a very difficult piece of work—and making long marches under trying circumstances—the Kashmiri shows much courage and endurance. For centuries, too, it must be remembered Kashmir has had to pay a high price for its beauties, and invader after invader has swept through, turning this little place of fertile soil and refreshing rivers into a holiday-ground for themselves and their lieutenants,

and the wretched people have only known peace and plenty when bowing the head willingly to the yoke and putting aside all resistance. Probably the people have in them still much of the old warlike spirit only waiting to be roused by some powerful incentive, and the assurance that while fighting, their homes will not be plundered and broken up. Wherever our Kashmiri auxiliaries of the Imperial Service troops have been employed they have behaved well and shown plenty of pluck, so that it may be that their old story is true, and that the invaders forced on them the "pheran" or womanly "frock," which is the universal wear in Kashmir, in order to break their spirit, and that once freed from that, they regain their old powers and forget their softness and effeminacy.

From the narrow, dark ways of the city we emerged into the Dal Lake. A strange network of waterways hedged about with osiers, and small trees, requiring a very accurate knowledge to prevent hopeless straying, for the floating gardens, about which more anon, have so filled up the lake that only in one part is there still open water, all the rest is cut up with countless tracks like miniature canals separated one from another by the high green crops or reeds and trees. Ponies and cattle feed among them; men, women, and children wade about or work at them from their shallow, flat-bottomed boats, and the place gives more the idea of being the home of a naturally amphibious race than any scene amid the waterways of Holland or the lagoons.

They have not yet accomplished all that is necessary for the complete comfort of such an existence, as was proved by the untimely upset of an aged crony who, steering her boat full of fodder gathered from the water,

ran into us in spite of warning cries, was precipitated from her insecure perch in front of her boat, shrieking aloud as we hooked her out. She could not at all see the joke, though my men laughed hugely as they assisted her to wring out her wispy garments and set her anew in her place. Again, as we were caught in a block, I spoke to a woman holding her baby. "Why not put it in the water?" I said. "It would be drowned," she screamed indignantly. I suppose common sense might have told me that, but really it only appeared natural that it should spread out little web feet and hands and take easily to what seemed, as if it must be, its natural element.

The last signs of the storm, in the form of heavy clouds, were floating away to the eastward over the crest of the Takht-i-Suleiman, and the sun was setting in a glory of gold and crimson and amethyst as we passed into the open. Fortress-crowned hills to the westward of the town stood out against the gorgeous background, fragments of cloudlets caught up the glow and showed a glittering lining to their dark purples and crimsons as they hurried in to join the *coucher du roi*, great monarch of light, and therefore life. Slowly we made our way through the great Dal Darwaza, the gates of the lake that prevent its being flooded when the river is high, and passing by various canals reached the Moonshi Bagh, the favourite moorings and camping-ground for married folk and ladies, the menkind, with their usual eye to beauty and comfort, having taken possession of the lovely Chenaar Bagh, the other good camping-ground. The Moonshi Bagh is on the main stream, and there is not much to complain of there when not too crowded. There is

splendid shade from the bank for boats, and great trees dotted about on the grass make a pleasant cover to the many white tents that, like huge mushrooms, had sprung up during my absence, the first warm weather having brought many folk up from the Punjab to enjoy the welcome cool in the northern valley.

They made the Moonshi Bagh a first stopping-place on their way to quarters in the hills, and very comfortable and often very pretty were their temporary houses, hung about with baskets of ferns and iris, inviting groups of light tables and chairs placed outside the open flaps, while numerous small fry, with the attendant *cortège* considered necessary for the rising generation of the dominant race, nurse, ayah-boy, and bearer, with frequent addition of pony and "pony-boy," dog and "dog-boy," proved that the climate was salubrious to youth and provocative of a great show of roses in what were probably very pale cheeks down in the plains. The cold freshness of morning and evening, too, made for a liveliness impossible in more relaxing parts.

Silently we glided into our quarters, and took up a good position beneath a huge chenaar tree, the doonga was made fast, a plank run out to the bank, steps cut, then as darkness fell, lamps were lighted, the straw blinds let down, and I was as cut off and almost as unknowing of my neighbours as when far away up in the Sind Valley, though pleasant little friendly notes arrived in the evening, and some very welcome presents of "dâlis" (baskets of vegetables and fruits) spoke of the advantages of neighbours when these are kindly and thoughtful. My "following" had no "doubts" as to the relative delights of solitary or sociable sojournings,

and many friends and relations came to the boat in the course of the evening to enjoy a smoke and hear what had befallen during the journey up to Sonamerg. Where news passes so quickly from one to another as in this paradise of gossips, it was impossible not to have the return noised abroad, and next morning merchants and Sahib lôg seemed equally aware that my boat had once more taken its place among them.

CHAPTER XI

All was so still and sweet that day,
  The nestling shade, the rippling stream,
All life, all breath, dissolved away
  Into a golden dream;
Warm and sweet, the scented shade
  Drowsily caught the breeze and stirr'd,
Faint and low through the green glade
  Came hum of bee and song of bird.

—*Buchanan.*

I go a pious pilgrimage—And am received with respect—Subsequent visits to the gardens of emperors and empresses—With some remarks about the raising of floating crops.

The *coucher du roi* had been gorgeous. The king's rising was more beautiful. My early hours had not been altogether a matter of choice, the "first few" of the evil clans of mosquitoes, that later on make life a burden in the lovely valley, had helped to make my narrow bed an unreposeful lair, and had created a desire for tea at such an hour as surprised even my crew, fairly accustomed as they were to matutinal starts. Refreshed and restored, it would have been a mere waste of energy not to go out, and I naturally turned my steps towards the Takht-i-Suleiman that, lying to the eastward of the town north of the river, throws its protecting shadow over the folk below.

It is one thousand feet above the city, and I believe really energetic folk run up and down every day before breakfast to keep themselves in condition. At intervals I tried three different paths up, started each time with spring and celerity, vowed halfway up, when short of breath and none too cool, that no hill in the world is worth close examination, and after five minutes on the summit was ready to swear that the scene that lay spread before me was worthy of a daily pilgrimage.

On the occasion of my first ascent I climbed the western face, starting through a burial-ground crowned with the latest white iris. Many pilgrims were passing up and down, for it was Monday. The women, being chiefly Hindus of the city, were often becomingly gowned in orange and scarlet draperies, with only the filmiest of white veils to represent the "sarhi." The hill is of great sanctity, partly resulting from the antiquity of the temple that crowns it, partly owing to its associations, for tradition says that at different periods it has been a place of pilgrimage to Buddhists—who still speak of it with much reverence—and Hindus; and that during the reign of the great iconoclast Sikander it was in the hands of the Mahomedans. Now, with the tolerance that comes of persecutions equally suffered, all three visit the shrine in peace and harmony, and even I, the wanderer, of strange faith and curious practices, had the way pointed out to me and was welcomed, when at length the summit was reached, by a charming-looking old priest who added the flowers I had gathered on my way to the many offerings lying on the great black snake encircling the symbol of the god Siva, and gave me in return one or two blooms consecrated by their use, and told me, in language difficult to

follow, of the vast antiquity of the place, and the supposed meaning of the Persian inscription on the two pillars, only part of which is visible above the pavement.

It was not a morning for worship in mysterious dark places, and I soon left the temple, and, seated on the steps below, watched the flooding of the valley with a glow that spread from Mahadeo to the Pir Panjâl, from distant Kolahoi to Haramuk. The light swept in vast waves, the snows flushed pink, the blue hillsides were purple, the river gave back the glittering rays, while the mists over the low-lying town were gathered together, garlanded by unseen hands as they lingered above the houses, then swept away, no longer needed during the day, and the way made clear for the great life restorer. The heads of the tall poplars, stately in their great avenues, cut up the town in all directions, and rustled in the fresh breeze, their bright leaves showing a livelier underlining. The stately chenaars stood unmoved, but down below, on the still surface of the lake, the myriad water growths took a brighter hue, and lifted long lines of bending stems and waved their slender leaves as the light penetrated to them and the wind swept through. Numberless chirrupings of happy birds filled the air, and there rose a faint fragrance, rising from the wealth of flowers opened by young spring. I thought I saw "Primavera," that old-world figure with her tender face, passing along the path below, Flora in attendance with all the bounding grace the old Florentine knew how to impart to his presentation of her, and the flying train of Zephyr to blow away all impurities and miasmas.

At first only Hari Parbat, crowned by a fortress, had been visible, but quickly, as the mists were torn

Kolahoi

apart, the whole geography of the city was mapped out, I could trace my path of the previous day and understand the devious waterways of the city and the lovely green lanes—where barges were carts—of the Dal Lake, and make up my mind which was to be my itinerary for the afternoon's expedition I promised myself. I came down the east side of the hill, or rather after following for some way a track on the northern slope, circled it to the eastward, joining the Gupcar road where the spur, of which the Takht is an offshoot, has been cut through to improve the connection between Srinagar and its pretty suburb on the shores of the lake. Here various houses for European visitors have been built, and there are also many for those whose business keeps them all the year here.

The hour was too early for formal calling, so I left the pretty houses and gardens of Gupcar just showing on my right, and turned away round the foot of the hill along a path, so narrow in places that there was hardly space between the mountain's rocky base and the lake waters for the pedestrian. In other parts, where there is sufficient open ground, vines are much grown, and they climb the tall poplars and mulberries, sending long, swinging trails from side to side, forming exquisite screens of greenery. Hops, too, grow here, and the factories are close by in which the raw produce is transferred into excellent liquids, beer, wines, and liqueurs (cherry and apple brandy). Though the day was young, I should not have regretted the appearance of some samples, for my expedition had, on the whole, been a warm one, and close down by the lake I found the heat very trying after the cooler regions I had been marching in. The thickets of cluster roses and heads of blue salvia,

and the sweet honeysuckles were pleasing vision, and as I worked round towards the "Bund," or high embankment of the Jhelum, where are many gardens, the hedges of yellow briar, the stately hollyhocks, twelve and fifteen feet high, of such gorgeous tints as are hardly dreamed of at home, and the almost dazzling masses of portulacas grown by the natives in every piece of waste ground, were a refreshment to the eyes.

A welcome refreshment to the inner woman was awaiting my return, for a kind friend, hearing of my return, had sent a vast store of delicious vegetables, great stalks of asparagus, lettuces of the juiciest, artichokes in a noble crown with multi-coloured supporting radishes, beet, carrots, new potatoes, and scarlet tomatoes, a fine offering and very acceptable after my somewhat monotonous diet of the last few weeks. Flanking this "dâli" (native word used for any kind of present sent in a basket) were good specimens of the early fruits of the valley—enormous black and white mulberries, early cherries red and black, strawberries, vying with the best in England, yellow raspberries, walnuts, and dried apricots. These are very good for cooking, and are generally eaten in this state, the "khobani" here not equalling those found in the Himalayas. Later on in July the peaches ripen, and the pears, and then is the time for the epicure to visit this land of "fruits and springs." Such mammoth specimens will be sold him for an anna or two that he will risk all possible deadly consequences in order that none may be wasted, and when, besides these, the grapes and apples, plums, and figs are ripe, he will be certain to feel that Srinagar must be Pomona's own especial capital.

Kashmir is admirably adapted to fruit growing, and if communications were but quicker and cheaper, it might be made the orchard to supply the thirsty Punjab and Central Provinces. Many good varieties of English and French fruits have been introduced at different times, and, whenever given good conditions, have been admirably successful. The people themselves, being great vegetarians and understanding the drying and storing of fruits and vegetables for winter use, are quite willing to try new and good methods if guaranteed against loss, and this has been more especially the case since the inauguration of the admirable new land settlement and finance scheme, largely brought about by Mr. Walter Lawrence. The villages are protected now from the exactions of State officials when their gardens or crops appear in too flourishing condition, and their lives rendered far easier.

My distant view of the lake in the morning had incited me to a nearer and closer examination of its beauties and strange crops. Accordingly, soon after my twelve o'clock breakfast (I generally kept to the down-country meals, viz., early cup of tea, mid-day "brunch," and late dinner) my small "shikar" was alongside the doonga, and, with four men to paddle, went away at a good pace towards the Dal Darwaza, where the tremendous tide rushing out necessitated the impressing of two extra men to pull me through.

On the Jhelum three types of boat are in general use, though there are many modifications of these typical patterns—the "doonga," which I have already described, and which is the living boat; the bahat, which is an enormous barge for conveying stone or wood, and is high at the stern and prow,

and covered; a khuch, an uncovered barge; and the small shikar, flat and covered, used by merchants and passengers wishing to make short, quick passages. The paddles used are heart-shaped, and very considerable skill is necessary before any progress is accomplished, the blade being small and the tide very swift in the channel of the river where it is unnaturally pent up in the city. A tinier variety of this craft is in use among the amphibious gardeners of the lake when passing along the water paths attending to or collecting produce.

We passed along the western side of the Dal in and out of the floating gardens, and I gradually understood their construction, which had been quite a mystery. There are two methods pursued in making them. In very shallow water, trees are planted, reeds grown between, and gradually as these become thick and strong a layer of soil, twigs, small stones, etc., is added, till the surface is well above water level, and there, on each little bed, two mounds of rich lake soil are laid, and seedlings of melons, cucumbers, etc., planted. These grow and flourish, having all they require in the way of rich earth, plentiful water, and a ripening sun. Where the water is deeper, the leaves of the high reeds are twined and plaited till a strong foundation is made, then, when they can bear a boy, soil is piled up, the stems are cut, and the garden is in a position to be towed about or moored between stout poles wherever the owner thinks that the conditions are favourable. These gardeners are among the most prosperous folk in Kashmir; they have always plenty to eat themselves, and are always certain of good prices for the surplus that they are able to sell, a condition of things which compensates them for the supreme contempt in which their class is

held by the members of other castes, for these people in their gardening operations handle "that which is unclean," and consequently are practically "outcasts" from any decent society.

Besides the crops raised on these curious water plantations, the Dal, like the Wular, yields a rich harvest from its numerous weeds and flowers. The singára (water nut) was not yet ripe, but everywhere I noted the pretty little rosette of leaves that marks its presence. This is one very widely used and most valuable foodstuff. Then various seeds are collected and parched, the most prized being the seed of the lotus, "the jewel in the heart of the lotus," which, whatever its mystical interpretation be, in practical life is certainly a reality. The leaf stems of this plant are also used as a vegetable, and the reed, everywhere very plentiful, besides its value as the raw material, from which is made the matting used by all the inhabitants as curtains, screens, and shutters, provides a pith from which a rather nice, sweet paste is manufactured. Besides all these special products, there remains a vast quantity of green stuff carefully harvested, and either eaten as spinach or salad by the various beings who inhabit the shores, and as fodder for the cattle.

The boatmen are great talkers, and are almost too willing to impart vast stores of information on the very slightest provocation. The lake people, like water folk in most parts of the world, have a peculiar language of their own. Passing through the region of the oblong cultivated beds and under some ancient bridges, we emerged into the centre of the lake, where there was no shelter and a fairly stiff breeze scuffled the water, swaying the great

cup leaves of the lotus hither and thither, till the drop of water held by most since the yesterday's rain ran about like a drop of mercury, and the boat shook, its keel-less condition making it more than a little unsteady. At first it seemed hardly safe to run across the open to the landing-place below the Nishat Bagh, which was our destination, but the "blast" soon hurried down the lake, leaving behind it a troubled track, and ten minutes hard paddling brought the little craft to the haven under the hill.

Stately above us rose the palace of the emperor, who delighted in retiring to this "garden of gladness" when the hot weather had sent people away from their homes down country, nor did the beautiful Queen Nur Mahal (Light of the palace) plan in vain these pleasances and prepare here great festivities. Though she and the generation she charmed have passed away, and they are known no longer, her work remains, and is still a "place of rest" to weary workers from the plains. The plantations, too, that she commanded give pleasant shade, her fountains still play in their vast stone basins, and purling streams of pure icy water flow between the terraces, and perfect pleasantness and peace reign in the paths trodden by this wise queen of old.

The whole garden is terraced, some of the spaces being given up to tangles of roses, lilacs, and syringas, some occupied by the stone basins where the fountains play. Beside the stone steps, that have to be climbed to reach the top, are quantities of fruit trees, especially cherries, large numbers of which were being sold in baskets, and proved a pleasing refresher, neither cafés nor cyclists' rests having yet become common in these

parts. On the higher terraces were splendid chenaars, and their deep shade was very welcome after the hot ascent. Seated on a wall, that overhung two enormous flights of steps leading to the next terrace, a stone water-shoot between, thoughts turned instinctively to the gay throngs that once filled these stately bowers, great ladies and history-making kings throwing aside for the time the wearisome and oppressive etiquette of their Eastern court, and playing at games among the bright flowers, or, if the heat was too overwhelming for activity, lying on the heaped-up cushions, while poets told tales of prowess in days of old, or sad stories of loves never consummated. Beneath the sickly stars musicians, too, trolled forth in strange harmonies and sad, sweet airs the songs that are still to be heard recited by the wandering bards at fairs and gatherings—

> O that my blood were water, thou athirst!
> And thou and I in some far desert land,
> How would I shed it gladly, if but first
> It touched thy lips before it reached the sand.
>
> O that my lips might ling'r o'er your soft hair!
> O that my life might die in a night like this!
> Your beauty sweet to soothe my fevered eyes,
> Drifting to death from dreams of a granted kiss.

And as the gay groups moved about under the trees on the grass, the sun casting flickering shades as it filtered through the delicate foliage of the planes, the kings and their ministry, forced always to be on the alert, could watch their city spread below them, and, guarded by the fortress on Hari Parbat, ready to signal forth the news of any trouble or insubordination. The view was passing fair, and as the sun sank in a glory of purple

and gold, covering the western sky with a scarlet mist, touching all the palaces and temples with the illuminator's brush, I was filled with a sense of joyousness and thankfulness that at least this day I was alive in such a world, where compensations many and adequate are given for imperfections and shortcomings, where the dreariness of mid-day heat and glare and the dull colourlessness of the noontide are qualified by the freshness and glory of the opening and the gorgeous serenity of its closing hours. Beauty fades and visions pass, and in that lies their greatest charm, for we unstable mortals weary of sameness, and that we might never be without something to cheer us, even in our dreariest hours, have been given a canopy overhead where the procession of the hours is marked by answering changes, and each minute marks a varying aspect of the glories in earth and sky.

So long had I delayed watching the fair scene before me that it was too late to visit the Shalimar Bagh, the great "garden of love," at the head of the lake; but leaving that for another day, I returned in my little boat, all the humbler members of the lake population very fully alive now that evening had brought its accustomed coolness. Countless dragon flies skimmed the waters, little frogs took flying leaps from one floating green islet to another, and hundreds of kingfishers, perched on the edges of the great lotus leaves, dived off with swift, dashing movements, captured their prey, and returned once more to their watching places. Golden orioles like lost sunbeams glinted in and out of the high stems of the innumerable water plants, and in the depths countless fish caroused among the shining weeds, the water world had come to life, and doubtless

wondered what large, ponderous intruder was passing overhead, casting a shadow as of possible danger on the denizens of the dark depths.

Before many days had passed I made another expedition to the more distant Shalimar Bagh, visiting on the way the Nasim Bagh. Like a vast park, this once garden, shorn of its terraces and its fountains, is still beautiful—chenaars in full beauty shade the green sward, and thickets of flowers, all that remain of the well-kept shrubberies, in places brighten with their gay colours the darkness of the dense tree foliage. Many small boats and some thoroughly English-looking yachts were moored beside the bank, and a well-stocked market garden close by looked decidedly inviting for a prolonged stay. From this point we crossed the lake, passing a strange island, the Sona Lanka or Char Chenaar (four chenaars) from the number of great planes that once shaded its four sides. Strange stories are told of the making of this islet, how a fair queen, wishing for a pavilion from which all the beauties of the lake could be seen and its exquisite reflections watched, ordered that foundations were to be made in this, the deepest part, regardless of cost, and the wretched lake dwellers were ordered to meet here, bringing their boats filled with stones, that these might be sunk and the islet rest secure. This they did, imploring that their boats, on which they depended for cultivating their gardens, might not be taken. Those to whom bread and cheese, or rather ortolans and wines, come without attracting notice to their cost, cannot be expected to consider such trifles as wooden craft and hardly raised crops, and the boats were ordered to be sunk; and then their owners, knowing that without these they were

useless as breadwinners for the hungry little ones, preferred to die quickly rather than by starvation, and sank with their boats, so literally it was on the "bones of men" that the fair islet and its pretty shrines were raised.

Now the heartless fair one is as dead as the poor lake dwellers, and the pavilions and trees that once graced the island are alike decayed and falling into their final annihilation. Their last inhabitant, an ancient fakir, who dwelt in the hollow trunk of one of the decaying chenaars, has also passed away. Landing, I misdoubted me whether the cruel queen had much satisfaction in the gratification of her whim; such fancies seldom are worth their cost; and if the mosquitoes in her day had anything like the strength of jaw and tenacity of purpose of their present-day descendants, afternoons in her "pleasant paradise" could not have been entirely without some purgatorial tincture.

From this islet there is a clear stretch of lake, and then one enters the canal leading up straight to the Shalimar Bagh, "the garden of love," largest of all the emperor's gardens, but though the pavilions are handsomer, built of fine black marble and ornamented with much painting, it is not comparable for beauty to the Nishat Bagh. Vast plantations of small pink Persian roses, grown for attar of roses, and the overgrown beds of carnations and lilies filled the air with sweet perfumes, and parties of natives roaming about, clad in the bright colours affected by city folk, or sitting in groups together, sang in gayer tones than I had ever heard from natives, and as we returned they challenged us from their boats with

Fishing boats on the Dal Lake

good wishes and snatches of melody. We paddled home on a golden flood, sky and water dyed to an unearthly brilliance by the setting sun. The islets in the lake were scarcely less radiant than the tiny pink and purple-puffed cloudlets that were drifting away from the central glory in the west behind Hari Parbat, while far away to the southward the Pir Panjâl showed their rose-stained snows, and nearer Haramuk, steep and solitary, towered against the evening sky.

From a gay boat-load rose the sounds of a song of love and flowers, accompanied by the light twanging of tiny stringed instruments—

The evening air is very sweet, from off the island bowers
Come scents of moghra* trees in bloom and choicest Persian flowers.
The moghra flowers that smell so sweet,
When Love's young fancies play,
The acrid moghra flowers, still sweet,
Though Love is burnt away.

The boat goes drifting uncontrolled, the rowers row no more,
They deftly turn the slender prow towards the further shore.
The moghra flowers, the moghra flowers,
While youth's quick pulses play,
They are so sweet, they still are sweet,
Though passion burns away.

O silver lake and silver night and tender silver sky,
Where, as the hours so swiftly pass, the moon rides white and high.
Ah! moghra flowers, sweet moghra flowers,
So dear to youth at play,
Ah! sweet and subtle moghra flowers,
That only last a day.

* "Moghra," the large double jessamine.

CHAPTER XII

The vast blue height
Was murmurous with peri's plumes,
And the leathern wings of genii.
—*Henley.*

Look on its broken arch, its ruin'd wall,
Its chambers desolate, and portals foul;
Yes, this was once ambition's airy hall,
The dome of thought, the palace of the soul.
—*Byron.*

A steep ascent leading to fine views and many backslidings—A fairy palace—Precipitate descent and an old man's warning.

While drifting about on the lake I had noticed high up on the side of the hills that close it in on the eastern side some very strange ruins, and as the natives called it the Peri Mahal (palace of the fairies), I thought it ought to be worth visiting, and, determined to be energetic one day, and, instead of floating about on the lake, make the ascent of Zebanwan, a peak some nine thousand feet high to the east of the Takht, and from there walk down the further slope, and visit the spot that had so attracted me. Srinagar is a real holiday land, where to make an effort even for one's own pleasure seems a

sacrilege—a denying of the spirit of the place—for which reason such acquaintances as I possessed, native and European, professed themselves greatly shocked at my enterprise. One thought that I should never reach the top, a quite insufficient reason for not at least making a start; another considered I should get hot, which seemed more than probable; a third offered me his pony, as being safer than my own ten toes, an opinion I vigorously combated; and my servant was certain that evil spirits of the worst—women with feet turned the wrong way—were lingering among the ruins to work havoc on the too adventurous. As I had no wish to be accompanied by such discouraging companions, I started out alone at a very early hour, hoping thereby to escape the full heat of the sun.

My path led me out behind the Moonshi Bagh along a very shadeless road, where the beautiful little cottage hospital, of which I shall have more to say in a later chapter, looked like a little piece of Old England, with its surrounding rows of stiff hollyhocks and astonished-faced sunflowers peering over the hedges to say, "How do you do this very fine day?" an island of coolness and rest, and on to the gap through which the road passes that leads to the pretty suburb of Gupcar, and from which one turns off to the left to mount the Takht from the eastern side, and to the right for the height I was going to attempt. From the very beginning I was glad I had refused the offer of a pony. With a path that at its best barely supported two not too enormous human feet, and at its worst left it uncertain whether a land-slip had obliterated its outlines lately, or whether, weary of an unappreciative world that did not value its attractions, it had quietly disappeared out of the

world, such a mount would only have been an added difficulty.

I was on the shady side of the hill; what it was like on the sunny side I leave to him to describe who has succeeded in returning from Purgatory. I fulfilled my friend's prophecy, and was very warm, and when worn out by heat I paid little heed to my footsteps, they skidded, and I had an amateur and unpleasant toboggan down to a very hard and unspringy rock! Once more I regained my narrow, stony way, and all thought, all existence even, was concentrated firstly, on putting my feet in the right place, and secondly, on trying to keep them there. The first height reached brought me on a level with the temple on the Takht, the next gave me a fine view of the Jhelum Valley, the many winding canals and the river flowing through the town, the long, straight lines of magnificent poplars cutting up the view with a Dutch primness strangely foreign to the rest of the landscape, the plantations of giant chenaars marking the popular camping-grounds, the Dal Lake with its water jungle, and straight below, shaded by the mountain-side, the pretty country houses of Gupcar, surrounded with bright gardens. It was pleasant resting on the green grass, but ever above me was the peak that seemed to frown at the dilatoriness of its visitor, so with an effort I moved on, and though the path was still steep it was somewhat easier than in its earlier stages.

I dawdled much on my way, finding little pleasure in making records, so far, at least, as celerity was concerned. From the summit far-reaching snows were to be seen in every direction; ranges to the south showed lovely peaks swathed below with cloud, that divided from the lower world the glistening heights cutting the blue sky;

while on the other sides detached heights rose to amazing altitudes, a few with unmistakable outlines—Kolahoi, Mahadeo, Haramuk—others unknown, nameless units in a crowd of beauty. What pleasant breezes blew there; the hot climb, the rough stones—they were only the short black tunnel leading to the life-giving upper air.

I took another track for my downward path, and slipped and fell and picked myself together many a time searching for flowers, such treasures, too, carpets of edelweiss, giant sedums, great purple cranesbill, yellow berberis, and everywhere carpets of roses and delicate ferns, which always retain for me the romance of anonymous friends, being quite unable to make out even distantly their families, with the exception of maidenhair, that grew everywhere profusely. After several rapid glissades and undignified sittings down, I was beginning to wonder whether the ruins had not best be left unexplored, when an unusually long slip, only ended by a violent jerk, which landed me in a berberis bush, revealed me such beauties that heat and sore bones and disappointments were instantly obliterated. An absolutely precipitous hillside descended from the spot where I was seated in anything but stately dignity, to the ruins, and the piece of hillside was one vast mosaic of roses—pale, rosy pink, deepest blood-red, and purple iris, not one rocky point was allowed to appear, not one tall weed to intervene, thus two queens had conquered all else, and were left alone to fight for dominion. Only an occasional berberis—his spikes, no doubt, securing some respect—was allowed a fractional flowering space. A living mosaic it was, so full of life that little broken-off pieces took fright at my unex-

pected arrival and fled down in flashes of orange and blue and purple. These I soon divined to be kingfishers and golden orioles fleeing to the refuge of the sombre old ruins that served as background to the gorgeous picture.

The "Peri Mahal" (fairies' palace) has stood for centuries, weather-worn and sad, alone, untenanted, unless the Kashmiris are right and the Peris have it in possession. If it is so, they have chosen well, for even fairies can desire naught better than a beautiful house in beautiful surroundings, a fair prospect in front, perfect flowers behind, blue sky, and good air! Designed for some palace of love it appears to be, not for the prosaic needs of an astronomical institution, as the *savants* declare it to have been in the sixteenth century by Sufi Mahomedans.

The difficulties of the descent were not even then all surmounted, and I managed to entangle myself in an almost impenetrable thicket of roses and shrubs, and only struggled through that to find below a thick hedge and a fairly wide stream. "Go round," "turn back," "no path," shouted some workmen, but one does not turn back after coming so far, and I began pushing my way through the thorny barrier. My position awoke the chivalry of an old weather-beaten fellow labouring in the fields, and he came across to show me the best place to break through. "Come from the Peri Palace?" he questioned. "Yes, and from far beyond," I answered, "from right over there over the hill-top, the great Zebanwan." "When I was young I have done that many a time," he replied, "but now," and he laughed the curious little cackle all natives seem to acquire as they get into years, "these old bent legs are only good

to take me to the assistance of others in difficulty," and he choked away at his little joke. "Truly the Memsahib is adventurous, and where does she go to now?" I replied by pointing out the lake not far distant. "Rest under the trees first till the sun is down; the Sahib lôg get fever when the sun is hot. Have you heard a song they sing down in the plains? I heard it in the past before I came back to rest in the Happy Valley." And in curious quavering tones he chanted the following song, and with an accent that showed he was no native of the country:—

REGRET.

O straight white road that runs to meet
  Across green fields the blue-green sea,
You knew the little weary feet
  Of my child-bride that was to be?

Her people brought her from the shore,
  One golden day in sultry June,
And I stood waiting at the door,
  Praying my eyes might see her soon.

With eager arms wide open thrown,
  Now never to be satisfied,
Ere I could make my love my own,
  She closed her amber eyes and died.

Alas! alas! they took no heed
  How frail she was, my little one,
But brought her here with cruel speed,
  Beneath the fierce, relentless sun.

We laid her on the marriage bed,
  The bridal flowers in her hand,
A maiden, from the ocean led,
  Only, alas! to die inland.

I walk alone; the air is sweet,
  The white road wanders to the sea,
I dream of those two little feet
  That grew so tired in reaching me.

Maybe the story told somewhat of his own life-history; there was a pathetic lingering over the last lines, and then he added hastily as I tried to give him a small tip, "No, no, I have pension; I was a soldier once, and can afford snuff and a little for the baba lôg that will come

Pandits and Panditanis, Kashmir

and worry an old fellow" (for a swarm of tiny fat babies had gradually collected from nowhere seemingly, as children will at the sound of music), "but let the Sahib mind the sun."

He stood salaaming as I turned away across a mulberry-shaded green in the direction of the lake, and I wished I knew more of his history, could speak the sympathy I felt, and be allowed if for once only to enter somewhat into the pleasures and troubles of this strange

folk that have so far more of those little emotions, that we try and believe our own especial property, than we generally think, and shut themselves off from all outsiders in their heart sorrows and inner joys.

I took to heart the good advice offered, and spent the mid-day hours under the shade of some vast walnut trees growing in a village, whose houses they served to shade, and watched some men gathering mulberries, first beating the branches with long bamboos, then stripping the boughs by climbing into them, putting the fruit in one basket and the leaves for the silkworms into the other—with the smaller trees they simply chopped off the branches. Sharing my laziness were some well-to-do city folk, the women quite extraordinarily graceful, and with the beautiful straight features of Romans, the turned-back white linings of their head-dress and sleeves looking most becoming against the deep blues and purples of their pherans.

CHAPTER XIII

I think the spectacle of a whole life in which you have no part paralyses personal desire; you are content to become a mere spectator."—*Stevenson.*

I luxuriate in the spectacle of others' labours—Some details as to arts and crafts in Srinagar—A pleasant tea party and a late return.

Of the city of Srinagar I had thus far seen really very little, and as it is impossible to live in a world of merchants, all selling amazingly artistic wares, without giving one's self up to some of the joys of collecting, for several days I eschewed long expeditions and gave my gracious permission to all the various sellers who passed in their swift little shikars to board my doonga and show me their goods. This is an ideal form of shopping, no bustle, no hurry, and the buyer is enabled to order exactly what he wants, for the goods produced at the first meeting are merely specimens from which cost and quality may be gauged. Any orders are entered in a book, with price offered by purchasers, and name and address of latter; also the time when the things are to be completed and returned. Naturally in practice this system does not quite fulfil its ideal theory. Like true artists the Kashmiri workman

likes taking his own time; sometimes also he prefers his own to his customer's ideas, and the result is that when the time of departure comes, the latter has either to take what is but the shadow of the thing ordered, or leave the country empty-handed. When possible, the most satisfactory method is to allow the Kashmiri liberty as to time, and, beyond a general scheme of colour and outline of pattern preferred, leave all details

Srinagar

and arrangements of shades to his individual taste. He will never make a mistake when unhampered by restrictions, and the pieces of embroidery, mats, carpets, etc., brought home by me look as lovely and perfect in their new surroundings as when worked under other skies for other purposes.

One of my first orders given before I went up the river to Islamabad had been for two large felt mats—

"numdahs," as they are called—and as I lay in my boat waiting to see what my visitors would bring to amuse me, the "kopra" (cloth) merchant arrived with my felts, and well satisfied I was. "Blue or blue green, with some red, brown, and a flowing pattern," had been my vague orders. Both were on white grounds; one was a beautifully intricate pattern of "chenaar" leaves in two shades of blue; the other "lake pattern," a skilful blending of the strange forms of water foliage carried out in blues, green, with dull red-brown stems, and, an addition that touched the heart of a peacock worshipper, each corner was adorned with one of those beautiful birds worked in the same colours. I was delighted, and the dark rich brown of my boat showed off worthily the soft colouring and skilful needlecraft. The workers, except for a few general outlines, do all their embroidery "by eye and mind" as a merchant explained to me, and are supplied with hanks of crewels of the colours ordered, which they use according to taste. The mats are about twelve rupees the pair, and five or six feet long by three or four broad. As they practically can be used for all purposes, as I have already explained, from hangings to a hold-all, they cannot be considered extravagant. I purchased also new covers for my cushions, the old ones having been considerably worn by their hard usage of the previous weeks, for eight annas (about eightpence) a piece, worked in the same style on rather thinner stuff, and curtains I ordered with flowing borders of green leaves.

That business over, I examined many beautiful pieces of "pashminas," so silky and light that, like the fairy wedding gowns of our childhood, they could be packed in a nutshell; the silkiest very costly, others of

great beauty less valuable. It is of this stuff that the far-famed Kashmir shawls are made, the wool itself being the "underwear" kindly provided by nature for the goats that live in the colder regions that surround the Happy Valley. There were puttoos, too, of every shade and thickness for a few annas the yard, beautifully warm and soft, and "all enduring"; these are the "homespuns" of the country, spun by the natives during the long winter hours from the wool of the sheep.

The kopra merchant dismissed, there came by a very smart boat, in it a slim, handsome boy in long blue coat, sinewy, graceful, the son of one of the principal silver and copper merchants. Boarding my doonga he proceeded to undo bundle after bundle of beautiful specimens of finest workmanship—not deeply stamped with strange, uncouth figures, and in rough, uncertain chiselling, like nearly all the down-country metal work I had seen, but covered with delicate reliefs surely and accurately carried out. "Come and have tea at my shop, and see some of my workers," pressed the merchant, and I acceded, knowing that however tempting I might find the goods shown, I could fall back on the safe position of "requiring time to consider," a condition that has saved from many a threatened financial difficulty.

Soon after the silver wares had been repacked and removed, a carpet merchant came with his boat to take me by arrangement to see his factory, and, paddled swiftly by eight lusty Kashmiris, we soon sped down the river to the sheds where hundreds of workers were sitting in rows, each busily employed on the loom in front of him. The wool used is grown locally, and the

industry is one of great benefit to the inhabitants, for not only are large numbers of men and boys employed on the actual work, but women and children prepare and wind the wool. The trade is one that has to be learnt early, and the entire training must be gone through before a workman is considered competent. The first process to be learned is the winding of the wool, which is handed over in enormous hanks to each foreman, and, squatting on the floor, were to be seen innumerable small brown boys busily winding it off from their toes, ever present and ready skein holders! The first promotion places them behind the looms, where they sit and run a line of the cotton into the warp to strengthen it for sustaining the wool, and then, with a large iron comb, they push it into place. When this part of the work is learned, they are transferred to the other side of the loom, where they begin by learning to place and knot, in the curious fashion in vogue, the wool for the plain stitches that edge the border, and at the end of six months they are usually expert enough to work at the difficult pattern. And the pattern, how is that accomplished? Strange as it may seem, the pattern is unknown to all the workers. All that they are given are slips of papers on which appear extraordinary hieroglyphics, the *patois* of the Kashmiri carpet-makers written in a shorthand of their own, indicating directions for the line next to be proceeded with. "3 green, lift 4, 2 black, 5 blue, 12 green, lift 6," etc., drones out the head-boy at each loom, and nimble brown fingers knot in the wool, fork it straight, and clip even with large iron scissors as the row is completed.

In this laborious thorough manner the great fabrics

are completed, some as large as sixty by thirty feet; every thread is strong, soft, enduring, and the prices merely range according to the quality of wool from, perhaps, sixteen rupees a square yard to ninety, one hundred, and one hundred and sixty for the finest. It is a constrained, hard life for such young folk, and they contrive some pleasant relaxations, catching an unfavoured neighbour a sly whack with the fork, or digging a too superior "head-boy" with the weighty scissors.

Group of Hindu artists

Beautiful old Persian and Kashmiri patterns are imitated, and the colouring, save in rare instances where Europeans have insisted on choosing home models to be copied, is never at fault.

The people who make these perfect patterns, and are the brains to these countless pairs of active hands, work in small, dark rooms, almost without accessories,

practically without properties, saving their pencil, their drawing board, and, best of all furnishings, an imaginative, active brain. Some I watched were adapting old patterns, others enlarging from tiny drawings sent by customers, the greater number making original designs, while not far distant were the men employed in writing out the directions in long narrow strips that I had heard the boys reading to the workers. So that weary eyes might be refreshed while engaged in that tiring work, pots of greenery were placed at the ends of the room, offering a soothing contrast to the cramped figures and forms locked up for so many hours daily.

The artistic perfection and material squalor were a strange contrast—men at a wage of a few annas a day doing work of priceless value; it was reminiscent of the Italian Middle Ages, and afforded considerable food for thought! Low as the wages are, these factories have been a great boon to the poor Kashmiri shawl makers, who, since the decline of their industry at the time of the Franco-Prussian war, have been the most miserable class in the country. Many have now become carpet-makers, and as their wares become better known and their artistic and technical goodness understood, more will be employed and higher wages given.

Returning to my own boat I was beguiled into the shop of a worker in enamels, who, waving in front of me an exquisite lamp of gilded brass decorated with many and bright colours, led me into his den, and, cunning comprehender of female character, he insisted on making me tea of the finest before he would show me anything, thereby making sure of binding me to purchase something after partaking of his hospitality.

It was not the will that was wanting, merely the coy and necessary rupees, but the man was well satisfied with a small order, and showed real pleasure in exhibiting his beautiful wares, some of the best ordered for his Highness the Maharajah, and destined for exhibition in London and Paris. Many of them require months to finish, the enamel being slow in hardening. They are made from crushed stones, and applied with a delicacy of fancy and richness of effect difficult to imagine unless seen. The blues made from lapis and turquoise are handsome, and so is the carbuncle red, but the beautiful dark greens and yellows obtained from agates and amber are more striking and uncommon. The old patterns, too, are very graceful, and this industry—more fortunate than many of the others—has been lucky in being unspoilt by foreign influence. Too slow and costly to tempt the ordinary tourist, these men have only been patronised by customers with real taste, and they generally follow their stock of old patterns, added to by such thorough artists as Mr. Kipling, of the Lahore School of Art. Silver was also used as a background for the enamels, but, on the whole, the gilt copper was the most effective.

I had not long returned to my boat from this expedition before my silver merchant arrived, and, arranging many pillows for me, helped me into his shikar, placed a mat for me to sit on, and, giving the word to the men, we started at great speed, going down with the tide. He had brought some new things with him wherewith to entertain the "lady," and he spread before me a beautiful silver ewer and basin after an old Persian design, a strange teapot from Leh, curious ornaments from Yarkand and Turkestan, a silver coffee service

designed by an Englishman of diseased imagination—so I gathered from studying the embodiment of his fancies—and small spoons of the form of the paddles employed in the boats, and salt cellars like the "kangars" or charcoal holders universally in use.

A rival merchant's boat tried to pass too closely, much to the indignation of my friend, who saw in this an attempt to borrow cheaply his designs. "Put up your umbrella quickly, Memsahib," he implored, and then, with his goods well sheltered from a too-inquiring gaze, he shouted back rude remarks to the baffled rival. "Go and weep, this Memsahib is buying largely," he protested; "she has bought a coffee set for five hundred rupees, and dishes for a thousand; she is coming to visit my shop; the Presence buys from no one else; she will purchase from me for three thousand rupees; cry your loudest; weep, weep, bad men, she," etc.; and I in hearing of all this, and conscious of an attempt to get for fifteen rupees my one purchase of two small sweet dishes!

But it was a game understood by all taking part, and the discomfited one and his crew were as ready to grin as our own men, knowing their turn would come another time. Passing through the rushing water under the first bridge, we drifted down with the quick current between great wooden houses, with their prettily-carved shutters and flower-filled balconies on either side. Occasionally gay garden patches brightened the scene, and leafy bowers, under which happy family parties were gathered, reminded one of Italy. At length we arrived at the stone steps leading to my entertainer's house, and there was his father to welcome me—an old man with the stateliest manners, who led me strange, dark

ways, across stone courts, up more steps to an open space, where, well-screened from the inquisitive, a group of men were working diligently at various beautiful copper goods. "These are but a few of my men," he explained. "I have four hundred workmen outside the town; these few are here that my visitors may see how my work is done."

The scene was worthy of a Rembrandt, the furnace casting a rich glow on the roundly moulded, olive-tinted limbs of the workers, all intent on their tasks. Their tools were of the simplest—a few small wedges and punches, some nails, small hammers—and with this tiny apparatus they were turning out great standard lamps four and five feet high, trays two feet across, jugs, lanterns, all covered with the finest of traceries and reliefs.

The beautiful colour of the copper work is obtained by boiling in apricot juice and salted water and much hard brushing, and this is what he recommended for the cleaning of all brasses and coppers. So good housewives, take note! Also, that if the necessary dried apricots cannot be obtained, almost as good results can be obtained by lemon juice. From the heat of the workshed it was pleasant to pass into the lofty, cool exhibition rooms, to be shown to a deep, low chair banked up with cushions, and while Russian tea of the most expensive kind was being brewed in a huge silver samovar, to look at the exquisite wares spread at one's feet—ornaments, tiny dishes, delicate stands, into which the light grace of the leafy models, always chosen for the patterns on these things, seem to have passed. The tea prepared, the golden liquid was poured into a tiny cup of priceless Chinese porcelain, and small native cakes

were broken into a silver plate for me, and sweetmeats were handed in an enamelled silver bowl. Then the "Presence" feeling sufficiently restored for such exercise, I was shown other rooms with handsome pieces of copper ware and many things of silvered tin, and I was struck with the delicate tact that refused to press me to buy when I had come as an honoured guest. In my own boat I was evidently considered capable of fighting my own battles!

Long were their lists of visitors and customers. Their books were a guide to the men at the "helm of the Indian Empire" for many decades; orders, too, came by every post; several fat envelopes arrived while I was there, and with many apologies I was asked to decipher the contents, as none in the establishment could read though several could speak English. One proved to be from a large English house asking for a consignment of some hundreds of goods, and laying great stress on the necessity for an equality of metal, a hint the hosts evidently considered extremely unnecessary. Another was from a very highly-placed lady, ordering a complete silver toilet set; while a third from an officer—young, I presumed—wishing for the sort of thing people use on tables for a wedding present, to be neither too costly or too rubbishy. Then, as payment for the trouble inflicted, I was offered and deigned to accept a little napkin ring of crushed turquoise work, and with much courteous salaaming I parted from my kind entertainers and wandered into a neighbouring warehouse, where was a family of workers in "papier-mâché."

That word is somewhat of a misnomer nowadays, for practically that material, made by pulping and moulding coarse country paper, is scarcely seen, but the style of

painting used on it in Persia and introduced from there centuries ago, is now employed for decorating a variety of objects made of a close-grained white wood, and the result is very similar, the varnish, procured by boiling clear copal (sundras) in pure turpentine, being that used for the genuine *papier-mâché*. The artist whose work I was looking at was a well-known worker, and certainly he deserved his reputation. Quite old, his thin, dried-up hands still retained their early steadiness and dexterity, and without measurements or compasses he produced the most intricate and oft-repeated designs with almost mathematical precision; his colouring, too, was very lovely, and his combinations of cherry red and green, blue greens and purples, and his use of gold showed the perfection of his art. Few of the Kashmir industries have suffered more than the *papier-mâché* trade from the many visitors who of late years have wandered up to the northern capital for the hot months, and the cheap, quick work, which is chiefly in demand, has ruined the quality. A few, however, still remain who are clever enough to be able to get their own prices, and the one I visited was one of these. It was impossible to hurry him, but each thing finished, whether tiny stamp-box or larger wares, such as blotting-book or card table, was a masterpiece. Many of his patterns were of unknown antiquity—the "flower patterns" of Persian origin showing a network of blossoms on a golden ground, the "devil pattern," from mysterious Kabul, with a thousand fiendish figures mixed in inextricable confusion. He was also willing to copy anything that struck him as suitable or pretty—sprigs of flowers from a sketch-book, birds, or scrolls from English cards—and he was vastly delighted by the present of a painting of a kingfisher, that being

such a familiar bit of colour to him, but he had never been able to introduce it into his work, not being able to copy except from the flat.

On leaving he pressed me to visit a neighbour who had wonderful brocades from Central Asia, and, on my pleading absolute inability to purchase, he assured me that would not be in the least expected. So I went, and found a royal personage with a vast following, filling most of the warehouse, though room was made for me, and, examining such riches of embroideries, silk draperies, antique brocades, gold cloths, and softest satins from many countries and many lands as I had hardly realised existed nowadays, I thought they must have been raped from some rich fairy store, and the silence of the owner as to their origin strengthened the idea, but I do not know. They may be merely the harvest of many visits to such hovels as I had visited in the morning in my search after carpets, and savage kings and wild tribesmen in Central Asia may own such gorgeous draperies. Anything is possible in the general topsy-turveydom east of Suez, where men write from right to left, and keep their heads covered to be respectful, where they run away when beckoned to, and have to be waved away if desired to approach, where the correct hanging of a portrait is head downward, and even the robin wears his red under his tail!

The light was fast failing as I left that treasure-house of colour and material, and I bade my boatmen paddle fast that I might not be too late on the water without warm wraps. Reluctantly they made ready to start; they had been listening to a quarrel between two women—each stalwart, abusive, truculent—and wished to watch the conclusion. However, the principals themselves considered that nightfall was too

Amiran Kadl, Srinagar

near at hand to end their argument on the spot, and adjourned the finish till the following day, inverting their grain-sifters where they had been using them, in token that they would not forget!

It was nearly eight as we passed the Amiran Kadal, the first bridge, the rushing current, pent up unnaturally between the piers, forcing the men to use their best efforts if they wished to pass under. The last rays of the setting sun caught various gilded domes and pinnacles, and added a beauty to the strange modern Hindu fanes generally lacking in the garish daylight. The various heights in the city—the Takht-i-Suleiman and Hari Parbat—stood out darkly against the deep blue vault, and as the moon rose shared the flood of her soft radiance with the dark mountains behind, other paddlers shouted greetings as we passed, women sitting in the latticed windows of the high houses craned out to see who was abroad so late. All the bustle of the earlier daylight hours was gone, and the city enjoyed that social intercourse which is the Eastern idea of spending night, not wasting in sleep the pleasant cool-time, but waiting for the cold dawn to commence his rest, the second part of which is enjoyed when the mid-day heat makes all exercise difficult and unpleasant. My headman waited me on the bank as I neared the doonga, anxious lest an accident should have delayed me, and there already, tempting to a hungry, chilly mortal, was the little dinner table spread with its embroidered cloth, my newest acquisition, spread out to please the eyes, and a savoury smell pervading, suggestive of a quick *soulagement* of my hunger pangs.

CHAPTER XIV

By many a name of many a creed
We have called upon them since the sands
Fell through time's hour-glass first; a seed
Of life; and out of many lands
Have we stretched hands.
—*Swinburne.*

Water streets—A Sikh who desired proselytes—Possible faiths—A sick Sahib—Some truisms of life in the tropics.

INTERESTED and delighted with my experiences in the city, I devoted several afternoons to paddling about in my "shikar," watching the gay townsfolk as they strolled on the bridges, listening to the latest gossip, slowly moored to the Maharajah's palace, where all may have free audience, or sat out either in their flower-decorated balconies or in the cool vine-covered arbours above the rivers, smoking, taking snuff, and alas! drinking, for both Hindus and Mussulman have fallen away from their old abstemious habits, and indulge freely in fermented liquors, apple brandy, of which they will take large quantities, being an especial favourite.

The bathing places, too, were much frequented by men in the daytime, and by the women as the evening drew in, for they are a water-loving people, and even the babies paddled, shrieking with delight as the water

covered their fat, brown toes and splashed their soft, rounded limbs. The various bridges (Kadal) under which we passed, the boatmen shouting together in chorus as they worked their hardest to keep the boat steadily in the middle of the stream, were all of the same type; their foundations are of deodar piles, then logs of wood about twenty-five to thirty feet long and two or three feet in girth are led two feet apart at right angles, alternately with layers of stone. So piers are built up from about twenty-five to thirty feet in

Rebuilding bridge after floods, 1893

height, and twenty-five feet square. These stand ninety feet apart, and are spanned by long, undressed deodar timbers. The force of the stream is broken by abutments of stones running to a point constructed on the up-stream side. These answer admirably their purpose, stemming the wild rush of waters and standing securely for hundreds of years, save when exceptional floods,

like the terrible one of July, '93, have swept all away. Even on that occasion the first bridge—the Amiran Kadal—though submerged, stood, but all the others were swept away. This was one of the worst floods ever known in Kashmir, and terrible destruction to city property resulted from it, more than two thousand houses disappearing in it. Mercifully, comparatively few lives were lost, though, of course, the amount of discomfort and misery it caused was very great.

When most peaceful the broad waters of the Jhelum, whose banks have been constantly encroached upon, are pent up in an unnaturally restricted bed, and there is always the danger that one day it will break its barriers, and once again overwhelm the heedless dwellers.

The waterway is bordered by many strange buildings, no two alike, the façades as irregular and as dissimilar as the inhabitants. On one side is an extraordinary building, slightly reminiscent of the stern of an old three-decker—this is the old palace. An older building just beside it is the palace of the Maharajah Ranbir Singh, yet others are being added, not strictly beautiful, but, with their strange colouring, decidedly effective, while the golden temple is a very gorgeous spot. Below, the water streets are very picturesque, with their variety of buildings, great stone steps, grand tombs, an occasional temple, and, most striking of all, the great wooden mosque of Shah Hamadan, that earlier in the year is a blaze of colour; its tulip-covered roof projecting over the fine carved sides of richest walnut wood. Here I landed one day to watch closer the gay throngs visiting it for the chief weekly service, dropping further down the river afterwards. Below it, on the

other side, is a strange place, once a mosque, but, being the gift of a woman, now degraded into a granary by the narrow-minded Mussulman.

The townspeople always appeared to me more cheerful, lazier individually than the country cultivators, the same difference as between a Parisian and a Brittany peasant. The conditions of life are easier in the town, food is cheap, and entertainment can always be had for the mere effort of walking to the market or into the public offices, or even gaping over the bridge!

The cold is great in winter, but can be easily overcome by pasting up the windows with newspapers, and filling the rooms with "kangars," the universally-used charcoal-holders of the country. On the boat drifted, stopping if I wished to look at a more than usually attractive house, or to ask some question as to the various cargoes being taken up and down in the great barges that perform universally the office of drays in this Eastern Venice.

By the sixth bridge I landed, and gazed long up stream at the strange vista the waterway presented, with its burden of curious boats, its bordering houses, its varied colouring. The sun was beginning to sink, throwing a rosy veil over the snow peaks of the Pir Panjâl, and from the lakes arose a flaky mist that blotted out into a soft obscurity the lower parts of the town, leaving the temple-crowned Takht and the fortress on Hari Parbat standing out, dark masses with aureoles of golden light. I wandered round by back ways to the large parade-ground to the west of the city, returning by the poplar-bordered roads to the second bridge, and then, having again joined my boat, we returned through the Chenaar Bagh, where many

house-boats were lying, groups of people dining out either beneath the great plane trees or on the roofs of their boats.

Many of these floating houses are very prettily built. One I saw on the stocks was in two colours—dark walnut and light pine—and every part of it was being exquisitely finished; the ceiling constructed of small pieces of wood, pieced together into charming designs.

House-boat, Srinagar

Landing just below the house-boats, I walked back across the golf links and the large polo ground to the river bank to talk to an old friend, the Sikh postmaster, a man of extensive learning, and even wider sympathies. Much had he told me of his religion and his early studies, his readings in Sanskrit, and his dippings into foreign creeds, but for all his searchings he found his

own teachers the best, and he wished to share his knowledge with all. "Read our writings, Memsahib," he would say, "follow our precepts." "But how can I?" I would reply, "life is short, and I do not know Sanskrit; besides, you have a commandment for every day of the year, and I cannot even obey ten." "Learning comes quickly to those who labour," was his reply; "on Sundays I will teach you Sanskrit, and our commandments can all be reduced to one—Do good to one another. Moreover, I am translating our holy writings, and they will soon be ready, then you can read them easily." The Sikh religion, with its contempt for ceremonies and superstitions, its brave teachings, and its encouragement of flowers and all lovely things, is mightily attractive; but alas! what place is there in it for women? The "Khalsa" (band of holy soldiers) can admit no woman; her only chance of future reward is through the kind offices of some good warrior, and no independent modern female could consent to her claims of future happiness being settled on such conditions. The postmaster understood somewhat of my objections, but felt quite sure that more study was all that was necessary to convince me; so we agreed for the present to sink all differences in a hunt for strawberries in his garden. These proved excellent, and, laden with them and a nice basket of flowers, we salaamed to each other, the postmaster grave and erect, his youngest child held high on his shoulder, looking sadly after me. I think he regretted that any one, however slightly, led towards deeper things should turn back to frivolous wanderings to and fro and—from his point of view—useless travels.

He had found his own belief after years of deep

study, and thought nothing of rising daily at five that he might have three hours' work at his self-imposed tremendous task of translating the Scriptures. True Sikh—loyal, brave, faithful—I could only trust that he found his own reward, and that no further misgivings as to the "highest form" would trouble him. It is not many who can rise to the highest in three departments, and he was super-excellent postmaster, a gardener, whose mere presence appeared to force on the flowers, and an admirable linguist!

I still possess the book of Sikh daily prayers he gave me, and the sight of the little brown volume brings back vividly to me the memory of many early-morning talks among his bright flowers, the flash of enthusiasm in his deep-set, dark eyes, the tenderness with which he carried his little one, and the beautiful words in which he enunciated those high truths that he so mistakenly believed to belong only to the Sikh religion. Courage, love of truth, and kindness—these are noble qualities, and the faith that inculcates them belongs to a high order of teaching.

Leaving the little dâk office, I walked along the bank in front of the Residency, a building of darkest walnut wood carved and ornamented, in beautiful surroundings, shady gardens stretching to the river on one side, and ending in lawn-tennis courts on the other. Beyond, several other English houses stood in gardens reaching to the water, and the profusion of roses, colossal hollyhocks, sweetest jessamines and lilies in each, outshone any like display I had seen in home gardens. A great peace was on land and water. As I reached my boat, the last rays of light were only sufficient to show up the dark outlines of the houses and the tall rows of

poplars, but not to pierce the deep, mysterious shadows thrown by the river banks. The air was heavy with the scent of flowers so familiar that it was easy to imagine one's self at home in some leafy lane in June. When I remembered the words used by the postmaster, and the strangeness of the relative position of teacher and taught, also in spite of some common ideas, the vast dissimilarity of thought, then I understood how far—very far—I was from all my old haunts and home ties, and the thought brought sadness; for though it is good to see strange lands, and to come in contact over seas with apostles of faiths that are not ours, there is a desire for sympathy deep down in most human hearts, however much they may wish to shut themselves up in their own enclosure, and sympathy is difficult to arrive at when there is no common plank of early associations or training on which two individuals can stand and hold converse!

The thought influenced me to such an extent that the following day I collected all the light literature I was possessed of, and went off to visit a friend lately sent up to Kashmir from the plains on sick leave, and suffering from bad fever, the result of overwork and too much plague duty. Fever is not a romantic or an attractive ailment, its victims do not draw sympathy by their interesting appearance, and much of it is apt to engender an uncomfortable shortness of temper, but as I sat that day and talked to a man who, barely into the fifth decade, looked old, and watched the thin fingers, and wondered whether he would ever live to reach again the home where we had known each other years before, it struck me there was an infinite pathos in this toll exacted of nearly all who would

taste life in our great Eastern possession, and shove on the weighty wheels of empire.

"Dull those Indian chaps are," is the remark one hears too often at home; "the only thing they know anything about is that beastly country, and even that they won't talk of." And no one realises that these men, rushing home for their precious ninety days' leave, cannot make "small talk" of what is the one reality of their lives. It is easier for them to pretend to the home folk that life in India is a mere ante-chamber, a waiting for the real thing, which will only begin when frock coats and top hats are once more donned and the London pavements are under foot, a period of pony riding and big game shooting, sauntered through, while a vast fortune is accumulating, which will enable the happy possessor to return and enjoy himself in the land of his fathers.

If any of the home folks do come out it is for a cold weather tour, and they kindly accept the best room in the bungalow, ride the only trained pony in the stable, lounge in the most comfortable chairs, and chaff lightly about the small duties and large pay of an Indian official. They do not understand the silence about the other seasons of the year, that there is a terrible dark tunnel called the hot weather, which men do not care to think of when once passed through, that there are days of long-drawn tension when plague or famine duties demand all attention, and it is useless to speculate whether heat, apoplexy, or sunstroke will give the final quietus, because no speculation can stave it off, and meanwhile some one must see the work done. It is easy, no doubt, when at home to talk of the joys of early retirement,

and of India as a sickening hole, and as men do not care to discourse of that innermost shrine that nearly all of us possess hidden away, silent, secret, adorned with our best thoughts, hung with out highest resolves, brightened only by hopes, so these will not admit to any save themselves that they would not exchange for all the "fleshpots of Israel," nor for all the "little village" could offer, their acreage of sand and scrub, their battalions of white turbaned, black-eyed natives, their charge of weak-kneed folk.

Yes, silence is best about such subjects, for to talk is to think, and thinking leads to brooding over sufferings and difficulties, and may ultimately tend to shakiness of nerve and incapacity for work. "Strength" is the one thing necessary where many depend on one man to stand upright. Sometimes, may be in the charged, electrically-laden hush before a thunderstorm, or in the calm coolness of a starlit night, surrounded by the speechful silence of still jungles, hearts are opened and hidden streams uncovered, and strange tales go round of difficulties and dangers, contests with native cruelty and corruption, cunningly-laid traps eluded, evils and powers of evil but dimly comprehended, and then the Indian Empire becomes a very real thing, and Imperialism seems different to the Westminster product: a thing of blood and sinew, a strength put out by the noblest and best of the sons of our little northern isle to support the unwieldly mass that demands all the energies evinced to keep life in itself!

As I sat talking that day, and noted the sad, weary expression of the eyes, the exhausted frame, India seemed some terrible vampire, sucking the energies

from all who would aid and sustain her, an over-exacting mistress. This man talked no gospel, translated no sacred screeds, was no sectarian, but his life preached in no mistakable terms the three great doctrines enunciated by the Sikh, that courage, kindness, and truth are the great virtues, and that to quietly count the cost and quietly overcome misgivings is better than courting needless dangers, to help the weakly brother is more meritorious than the frantic efforts of much-advertised philanthropy, and that to take the simple facts of life as they stand and construct canons for the conduct of our life from them, is better than to befog ourselves in searchings after misty phrases of philosophy.

Strength is the soul of man, and all that nourishes that strength is wholesome, the only thing worth anything; to be subject is bad, and slavish vices are foul and unworthy, for which reason this wide empire is a noble institution, and one out of which men, strong and sinewy, shall be bred, the weak-kneed and unstable losing caste and class.

It was a pleasant change to sit and talk with any one who could understand without speaking every word, who could catch one's meaning before the phrase was complete, or an allusion but partly indicated; better still it was to note the sympathy of the strong character for the weaknesses of his soft underlings, and the real pity and sorrow for the hopeless, unmerited sufferings of his peoples. People at home wonder at the incapacity in India to deal with appalling disasters—plagues of sickness and hunger. Folk in India have no time for wonder or speculation, but give up their strength and their health, their money, and their enjoyment to alleviate what they cannot wholly relieve, to aid what they cannot understand.

As I stood up to say good-bye, the other pulled himself together. "I'm going down next week," he said laconically. "Going down; why, you are shaking with fever now." "That's nothing; I've been writing, and my hand is a bit shaky, but Mitcham, my chief, has been sent off—nearly went out altogether last week—and there's no one to go in his place, and that native overseer will be stealing the grain if I don't go and look after things—well, it was awfully good of you to come and bring those papers; made me think of that day long ago at the —— Races, those pictures in the *Sporting* and *Dramatic!* Perhaps we will meet there again, if I am home next year."

"Yes, if!"

Natives are not the only ones who die when plague and famine stride through the land.

CHAPTER XV

Are we not happy? Sunlit air,
  Soft colour, floods of dewy light,
A flowery perfume everywhere
  Pour out their wealth for our delight.
—*E. W. Gosse.*

I start for cooler regions—Good ponies and annoying attendants—I lose my temper and feel the heat—Arrived in cooler regions—I arrange my camp and note the colour of spring flowers.

SEARCHING city waterways and scouring lake lanes had been pleasant occupations so long as the weather was not too oppressive and the sun shorn somewhat of his full power, but there arrived a day when it was too hot to walk, the lake was too mosquito-covered to be visited, and merchants and customers were alike too listless to take interest in the cheapening of an embroidery or the defeat of a rival salesman. Heat has a way of drawing the backbone and moral fibre out of a human being, so that all shame ceases at the shirking of any effort. Nations would cease to rage and men to wrangle if only enough warmth could be engendered to reduce nature to a condition of emotionless pulp!

Preferring an existence of storm and stress to a

Nirvana of heat, I bethought me of higher levels to be reached by a day or two of marching, and once more gave the order for a move. The order was not received with any thrill of joy by my faithful attendants; for them it meant that we were leaving the fleshpots of Egypt to sojourn in the desert, exchanging a place of cheap grain and many friends, endless opportunities for gossip, and a warmth which operated more effectively than many clothes and without the cost, for loneliness and cold and few provisions. Sometimes the many must be sacrificed to the one, and the many, on the mention of increased pay and plenty of ponies for transport and riding, cheerfully gave their consent to be immolated.

The portly and courtly Sir Rao Amarnath sent baggage ponies, and early one morning a lordly procession was formed on the bank, and slowly drifted off into the "ewigkeit," or more exactly, disappeared down the immense avenue of poplars leading from the Residency to the city, from there on towards the eternal snows. These ponies were far superior to the casual baggage animals I had employed in other parts of the valley, there being all the difference between professionals and amateurs. The latter, or rather their owners for them, had always begun operations by loud protestations of the powers of their beasts to carry limitless burdens, protestations falsified by their incapacity to accomplish the firm attachment of even the smaller of the bundles. Then there would follow a period of three-cornered insults, beasts, owners, and followers taking equal shares, the beasts contributing by snorts and kicks. Lastly, a league defensive and offensive between the three belligerent parties would

be cemented, and I would find myself the common enemy to be looted and spoiled to the uttermost. A conflict usually continued till the offer of slightly-increased pay—"dastur" ("that which is customary") was the polite word employed—brought about renewed activity and eventually a start.

State transport ponies behaved differently; they arrived with neat pack saddles and a plethora of hooks and ropes, bundles were swiftly arranged, balanced, fastened, and I soon had the pleasure of seeing the first bearing off a stately tin tub, the others with my most valued possessions. I followed, the ponies and retainers, stragglers, outsiders interested in my proceedings, small fry and female belongings to be gradually dropped behind, brought up the rear. A dog, two goats, and a boat were unconsidered trifles also in the procession, and a few camels and a cow or two would have made the party eminently patriarchal. I wished to look at some gardens I had heard of, and deviating to right and left in search of those made me lose my place in the order of things, and when I again rejoined the high road leading directly from the city to Mágam, I fondly imagined all my belongings were well ahead. Needless to mention, they too had found objects of interest in the city, and were gossiping, dawdling, bargaining far behind.

The route was pleasantly reminiscent of Low Country ways, giant poplars on either side gave a grateful shade, cattle and sheep grazed in the rich marsh lands stretching away to the river, and slow, sad-coated peasants dawdled along, while their womenkind outside the cottages were busy weaving or drying the ripe tomatoes and marrows in preparation for the long

winter months when food is scarce. A pleasant breeze from the river rustled the poplar leaves, and the blue sky above was duplicated in the sheets of blue iris flowering profusely in the low-lying, damp fields, and filling the air with a fragrance that was two parts essence of spring and one part stolen from the sedges and other water growths that surrounded them. Spring sunshine and gladness were everywhere, and the country was in festive garb for nature's annual flower fête. Even the coolies could not pass without presenting a spray of roses or some jessamine freshly plucked, and in the villages old and young were gathered under the shadiest trees watching with amazement the energetic Memsahib who could stride along hot roads, while even they, poor, "less than the dust," were content to take in a big draught of sunshine and restful ease against the pinching season of bitter cold and darkness so soon to follow.

Some thought of being carried by one of the riding ponies if the high-peaked native saddle would admit of my sitting sideways on it had been in my mind, and as the day wore on and the poplars disappeared, leaving the weary pedestrian feeling like a hapless beetle crawling over a quite illimitable track, but without even the comfort of a really adequate black shell, the idea gathered strength, and so, on arriving at a "ganw" (village), where I had agreed with my men they were to wait if I had not already overtaken them, I questioned some of the people as to whether they had seen my caravan. No men had been seen, no ponies; misgivings filled my mind, and—final drop into chaos—a coolie from the other direction told me of having met them eight miles back comfortably settled for their "roti khana" (dinner)! Devoting men, ponies, he and she goats,

and all other living things to deepest regions, I decided to push on five more weary miles on a dreary, scorching, blistering road, though the Kashmiri villagers, who have a fine independent courtesy, were for my staying and resting under their trees, offering me milk and mulberries in a plaited grass basket, and bringing water and salt to refresh my tired feet. I thanked them, but departed, my heart being hot against all natives by reason of the faithlessness of my own followers, so I, in familiar parlance, cut off my nose to spite my face, and starting out once more on my lonely way, nearly fell by the wayside, for the sun was powerful, and almost succeeded in bowling me over!

Marching and a free life in the wild were altogether at a discount when I at last reached the friendly dâḳ bungalow at Mágam, having been lured on by no vision of snow-crowned heights and noble forests to be viewed in the near future, but rather tempted forward by a sordid will o' the wispish flavour of iced hock. The idea of obtaining this ambrosial liquid had strengthened my tottering footsteps, and it was with an echo of "cooling rills of sparkling hocks," combined with an after-thought of peaches and grapes in my mind, that I marched into the verandah and called loudly for "Khansama." The Khansama was polite and willing, as is natural to his class of wayside hosts all the world over, but hock—no; that had been an absurdity bred in my feverish brain, the "Sahib could have whatever she desired"—if, if—she were able to provide it! As it seemed uncertain whether it would be hours or days before my straggling *cortège* came in, I left my refreshment to my host, knowing it useless to order when only the names of things writ large, clear, and inviting, were to be noted in the tariff, the substance of them

remaining among the things unseen. As iced hock and peaches were not to be procured, the Memsahib made shift with stewed tea and bath olivers, and as a sun head was anxious to claim her, turned into an invitingly shady room, where flies tormented and mosquitoes devoured, and spent the rest of the day in that condition of super-self-realisation, induced by having all the most sensitive portions marked out for the sport of a variety of pain devils.

My belongings arrived towards dusk, and it was impossible to blame them for having rested during the heat of the day while I was stupidly pushing on, and for arriving fresh and cool, especially when it was pointed out in sympathetic tones that the immediate cause of the first lagging had been the belief that the Memsahib was still behind and might require assistance.

I had become used to a cheerful statement of what should be rather than what was, and so ought not to have been led away when my men promised many ponies, quantities of the best riding ponies for me to choose from on the morrow. Dawn flushed the sky with a flood of rosy light, and the dawn was transformed to broadest daylight, but neither ponies nor owners of ponies were to be seen. My men continued to chatter cheerfully of "what was to be," but, as there seemed no reason to consider a miraculous intervention on my behalf likely, I decided to consider the riding pony one of those charming "might have beens," and make use of that which I had, namely, two walking legs. I could not, without hard-heartedness, make use of the riding pony brought from Srinagar, for the aged cook had developed fever and rheumatism from the bare thought of camping, and it had been given up to him.

I was not good to talk to that morning, and my

people remained peculiarly obliterated, as is their wise custom when the air is disturbed, and so I departed for my solitary tramp, satisfied that when I was found dead by the way they would be sorry they had treated me so thoughtlessly. It was an unfriendly road, mounting, always mounting with that aggravating unsteadiness which allows of no comfortable downhill breaks to give an added spurt to the next ascent.

If I had had the energy to look up, white peaks before me might have served as tempting goal posts, and had I not realised that to stand still was to be lost, I could have waited for a few minutes to look behind at the Jhelum winding its way through the green valley, that was shut in on the thither side by ranges of dark hills surmounted by Haramuk, from whom it was impossible to be long separated, and a few other giants. I would not even delay to drink water from a racy streamlet that rushed with prodigious noise and splashing down on my right, and, disappearing under the roadway, turned up again on the left with a fine air of "Hullo, here we are again, why do you not hurry along as quickly as I do?" before it finally made its way down the rose-clad bank to lower levels where the last "kushaba" was in progress, the rice plants having by this time reached fine dimensions. Instruction might have been sucked in on every side by one who had not concentrated his whole mind in mere physical progress, for the road passed through strange strata, and some curious examples of the "karewa" (explained elsewhere) were worth an examining look, not just the angry contempt which was all I could spare then. I was wound up to go a certain distance, and any deviation from straight ahead could only be accomplished at risk of the works running down too soon.

Hardened non-observer as I was, I could not resist the beguilements of a flowery bank that appeared, as the path, taking a sudden turn to the left, began to rise steeply; it was covered with roses, such roses, of every shade and hue, and with the daintiest undergrowth of forget-me-not of a blue so deep and pure that it was easy to understand why "gentians" had suggested themselves. It was a reviving spectacle, and when further treasures of jessamine, berberis, other roses, and other forget-me-nots revealed themselves the path grew less stony, the sun less tiring, and finally turning under great blue pines, the road was absolutely without drawbacks, and I ceased to care how many miles lay before me, how steep the path, or how many hours I might have to wait for dilatory coolies. Slowly I moved on, a fresh breeze blowing from the snow slopes across the valley, an ever-increasing number of hill flowers luring up steep banks or down precipitous slopes.

It is difficult to imagine with what intention I picked the great bunches that cumbered me sadly and were sorely in my way, but men and women are collecting animals, and it was impossible to move on without the doubtful compliment of noting in this drastic fashion their existence and beauty. Purples and yellows were the prevailing colours, huge crane's bill, iris, tiny yellow viola in sheets, and bushes of berberis and jessamine, asparagus fern made feathery greenery, and sturdier filice made a suitable background.

Up and up wound the path, and always above but never growing any nearer was the wooden bungalow which crowns the height I knew to be my destination. Two coolies passed me marching briskly up the incline, heavy, over-filled kiltas

on their backs, and bearing forward on their strong sticks to support them, and I inquired of the distance. "The smoke of two pipes," was the unlucid answer. I have not yet smoked a native pipe, so the length of time taken to finish one was unknown to me. But they told me that above the weather had been very bad, that snow had fallen a day or two before, and much rain was soon expected. As I contemplated camping this was not reassuring, for

Gulmerg bazaar

I had been warned what Gulmerg could be when really damp.

The coolies told me there was a shorter route up than the one I had come, and it would probably be taken by my retainers. This spurred me to renewed efforts, hoping I should not be kept too long waiting at the top for them. The air was distinctly cooler, for I was some three thousand feet higher than my last resting-place, Mágam, and with a little effort I was really up on a level with the tiny bazaar—still empty, for the Parsee merchants who come up in the summer were still

below in the valley—the whole merg spread out before me, vast shelving sweeps of greenness and flowers screened on every side by secular forests of giant pines from the fierce blasts and rigorous tempests that sweep over the lonely snow-clad peaks above.

It was like standing on the outer rim of a great saucer, winter above, spring at my feet, spring that, as is her wont, had arrayed herself in her best-hued cloak of white and blue, the colours of virginal new life and passionless fruitfulness. Among the Alps the snow slopes give way to the gentians and narcissus; in our spring gardens the frost-bound soil slowly softens and clothes itself with a wreath of snowdrops, of anemones, blue squills, starch hyacinths, and starry chionadoxa; and here in Kashmir the snows had given place to a wealth of blue iris that bordered each streamlet, peering curiously into the waters to watch their liberation from their long-borne frost chains, or crowned the little clusters of mud-plastered graves announcing to the poor bodies hidden away below that they were not forgotten, while the friendly free breath of the victorious spring was waking all round to new life.

Above the waters gathered, at the bottom of the hollow below me were other blossoms that matched the iris, blue anemones, blue gentians, blue forget-me-nots, blue Jacob's ladder, and thousands and thousands of white stitchwort and chickweed, white ornithagallum that imitate the lilies of the valley so well, and white marsh marigolds. The towering pine forests stood dark and sombre, ringing round the grassy basin, and dividing the flowery whiteness below from the cold glistening snows above. It was one of these scenes that, like the court of King Solomon, takes the heart out of a woman, impressing her with a depressing feeling of fugitiveness

and unimportance, with being a "mere insect of an hour" crawling about among the grasses when compared to the stately forest kings that towered above. The trees and the heights swallowed up all poor mortality and that which appertained thereto, their huts and their tents, so that though many were encamped the place seemed deserted, and it was only by wearisome walks backwards and forwards that the size of this green oasis was realised, and what in the distance looked like white specks proved to be tents.

These passing visitors were strangely at the mercy of the elements in their tiny, fragile shells. Fearful storms swept down from the heights and came rushing down the deep valleys which cut off the hills above Gulmerg from the neighbouring heights, tempests of thunder and lightning echoed and re-echoed round the encircling mountains, and sudden swift drifts of snow would descend; and yet the charm of the existence was very great, practically cut off from all the society and people of the populous valley, alone among the pine forests and the mergs. For only by chance accident was it possible to learn the identity of any fellow-sojourners, and as the "season" had not yet commenced, no people of sociable tastes had yet arrived, they not considering Gulmerg worth a visit till summer had made herself more decidedly felt. Eventually storms and rain uprooted me, as they will uproot the strongest, for few are proof for long periods together against constant and daily drenchings if dry clothes are an impossibility, for the reason that every part of the temporary home is soaking, and the descending floods will not allow of a fire; but it was with the deepest regret that I left Gulmerg and those flower-besprent meadows with their grave forest sentinels cut off from the rest of the valley,

and guarded at a distance by some of the grandest peaks in the world.

To return to the day of my arrival: I had scarcely had time to fix on a suitable camping-ground, and station some coolie to watch for my belated retainers and instruct them where I had determined to pitch my moving tents, when the black clouds that had quickly been passing over dark Apharwat lowered, expanded, and emptied themselves on the green merg. Till that moment I had believed that my morning's walk had taken all energy away. It was pleasant to find I had underrated my powers, and in a few brief moments I was across the merg, swift as "arrow from the bow," and into the shelter of the friendly post office, still in its casual winter condition, not yet in strict working order for the season. "Much rain," was my sufficiently obvious remark as I entered. "We do not consider that much rain," answered the postmaster, without emotion. "It has not descended before to-day; the merg has lately been one flood; I should advise you to camp high up, and see that the land is not moving with the wet. Here there is much rain; the Barsat (the real rainy season) is expected soon"! The remark was not cheering to one who considered the sample received quite representative enough of moisture without added proofs of the powers of the god of watering pots and rheumatics. Hoping for better things, I made my way across the sopping merg to where I could see my men standing about, soaking and miserable, crossing the many streams by small bridges or stepping-stones.

CHAPTER XVI

Trees are the most civil society. . . . Acres and acres full of patriarchs contiguously rooted, their green tops billowing in the wind, their stalwart young twigs pushing up about their knees, a whole forest healthy and beautiful giving colour to the light, giving perfume to the air; what is this but the most imposing piece in nature's repertory?—*Stevenson.*

Worried by my camp—I wander into the woods—Am consoled by the trees but depressed by the absence of Nanga Parbat—Catch a glimpse of him, but my raptures are rudely interrupted by irrelevant menials.

As my camp was to be of a more permanent order than any I had had, a good deal of arranging was required, and as usual when any work was on hand, the sound of much talking and not a little heated discussion was to be heard among the men. Each was quite certain that that afternoon of labour would cause many and complicated complaints, and they were all equally sure that provisions would be unobtainable, cooking an impossibility, and the Memsahib's life a misery.

For all difficulties raised there is but one possible answer in this land of excuses and procrastination, "juldi bandobast karo" (do the business quickly). So having spoken, I wrapped myself in impenetrable reserve, watched the changing sky, and considered my

future movements while my little white houses gradually rose among the sheltering pines, and in spite of the shock of discovering that all chairs save one had been forgotten, and that water was to be found everywhere a little below the surface of the soil, began to unpack. By the time tea was ready I felt myself an old established resident, and ready to exchange compliments with other travellers that might pass my way. Except a few "gujas" (herds people) who were moving their encampment, and quite unapproachable from the conversational point of view, owing to the strange language they talked, these were mostly of the four-footed order; two ponies strayed through our lines, and getting frightened, nearly broke their legs over the tent ropes, and then a Sahib's dog, who was hugely delighted at finding a friend of his own order in this distant merg.

A brisk walk, with the post office again as goal, was pleasantly warming, the damp and the evening chilliness in this high region being trying, for we were close on 9000 feet up. The post office could produce no dâk for me, but the master gave me a vast amount of gossip as to visitors, the date of their likely arrival, information of the weather, mostly of an extremely gloomy description, and hints as to the procuring of food-stuffs, a rather difficult question till the regular purveyors had arrived from the valley below. Finally, a fowl of delicate proportions and very attenuated limbs was promised for the morrow, a little milk was available at once, and a few eggs were to be brought during the following days. Of vegetables there was not the meagrest representative, and "attar" (flour, the almost exclusive food of the servants) was immensely dear.

I was glad then that the aged bawarchi (cook) had thought it necessary (contrary to my ideas) to bring dried tongue and a large tin of marmalade, also some brown flour wherewith to make bread. I was quite ready for my dinner when I reached the tents, the long walk and the fact of but two scanty meals of tea taken during the day having given an edge to my appetite, and the appearance of my cook with both of his arms tied up in coloured comforters did not exhilarate me. "How could he be expected to cook a dinner for the Presence," he asked, "when there was no food, the waters were in his cooking tent, when it was impossible to balance kettle or cooking pot on the stones (his range was composed of three small boulders and a bar), and both his arms were useless from rheumatism, and his head confused with fever?" When quite devoid of ideas it is well to make no suggestions, so with finely veiled irony I remarked that I would prepare for dinner, and perchance a coolie could be found to arrange for the food. I also noticed slightingly the position chosen for the cooking pâl—well down on the slope of the hill—and passed to my little tent in serious doubts as to whether I should not have to turn in to bed as the only method of forgetting my hunger.

Twenty minutes later a discreet cough told me the bearer was outside. "The dinner was on the table," and under the dark trees stood a table as well covered and daintily set out as if there had been no difficulties in the preparation of my meal, no complainings, no rheumatic arms to hinder progress. Having entered their protest the "naukar lôg" had considered it would be a covering of themselves with shame if I lacked for anything I was accustomed to. A large bunch of iris faced

me at my small board, trails of clematis, picked low down on the hillside, wound about the dimly sketched out vacant places, for no native servant, however scanty his store of serving wares, can set a table without a suggestion of four places, the ghostly companions of the master or mistress. Of the courses, their number and variety has left no lasting impression; suffice it that, however unused the ingredients, the results were excellent, and when savoury eggs of a new order had been reached and there were still symptoms of more to follow, I could only cry "hold," for I had partaken largely of everything, fearing it might be the finale of the menu. How much of that dinner was legitimately mine, and how much had been filched from a small encampment across the merg, whose owner had been called away for two days, I never cared to consider.

I congratulated the cook, but he remained doubtful of his future and was without confidence in the present arrangement. "The Memsahib must eat, therefore there had been dinner, and who could cook but himself, but there was certainty that on the morrow such a climate would have consummated his final collapse, and then the fate of all the camp would be but a matter of hours."

The prospect was dreary, but it was impossible to be long depressed in such surroundings. A young moon was hidden at times by rushing clouds, swept by the fitful wind that, whistling among the trees low down on the hillside, filled the air with a bustling murmur like the roll of the distant sea. As the light shone clear, or was overcast, so the merg was lost in deepest gloom, or showed the rises and depressions that broke up the surface. As night closed in, the breeze had a warmer

breath, and all the rude severity of the scene, so striking during the sunny mid-day, was transformed into a sheltering softness, the tall tree trunks guarded our tents, warding off untoward storms and cruel blasts, the stream below murmured gently of the snow peaks above, from which it had been liberated by the soft touch of spring, the rustling of the grass as the ponies moved slowly about gave a feeling of outside fellowship, the tents on the other side had an added importance from the illuminating touch of the moon, and cheered with an assurance of near companionship. Better than all those, as the night hours passed, was the sense of brotherhood with all life—never enjoyed except by those who have slept out o' nights and, freed from the fetters of brick walls and constraining roofs, have known what it is to inhale the midnight air with no barriers between them and the stars, and have been given a tiny key to the full understanding of nature's language. Who has not felt the strange languor closely allied to natural death that comes on all things towards the midnight hours, the breathlesness of supreme exhaustion, followed by the half-awakening of the "false dawn"—as the Eastern writers call that curious radiance which causes all nature "to turn in her sleep"—so that trees rustle, ferns and flowers sway together, the cattle bestir themselves to take a few mouthfuls of herbage, watching dogs give an anxious bark, and then, with the dying of the radiance of the misleading light, all turn to rest again with a lighter sleep and more broken breathing, till the true herald of the dawn gently blots out the stars and sweeps the skies in preparation for the grand procession of the dawn, the glorious *lever du rideau* of each new day's toil? On such a night it is but a loss of

life to sleep—above all, to sleep between close walls in crowded houses is a horror and no refreshment, very different to the light slumber that comes when there is naught between the wayfarer and the velvety dark sky, and only the *camaraderie* of trees and flowers.

That night was an initiation into, or rather the renewal of an old intimacy with, the secret springs of nature. I understood how much to be pitied were all who had not felt the soft, protecting hand of that transparent darkness laid directly on them without screens of walls and carpets. Cobwebs of doubts, difficulties, misgivings were brushed aside by the besom of an understanding bigger —greater—than myself, that had taken posession of my small nature, and so long as those glorious hours lasted I was caught up into a companionship of great things, a fellowship with vast enterprise. I was not the "crushed worm" of some superior being looking condescendingly down, but I was honoured like the tiny stone that becomes part and parcel of a vast and glorious mosaic. Soon after dawn I was afoot, and walking round the "circular road" to see whether vast Nanga Parbat would reveal himself. Alas! mists blotted out all view; even the nearer peaks were invisible, and sight could not pierce the intervening clouds sufficiently to see even the Wular Lake or the Jhelum below.

For two years the temple of Martand and the peak of Nanga Parbat had been names of magnetic power to me; to see them I had crossed seas and lands. Martand had been closely scanned and shown itself a worthy shrine; Nanga Parbat still held aloof. It had proved impossible with the short time at my command to attempt a nearer approach to that vast monarch of the Central Asian heights, and as day after day passed at

Gulmerg and still he remained invisible, I feared I should have to return home and see again his portrait—most successful, surely, of snow photographs that adorns the walls of the Royal Geographical—without being cheered by a vision of the prototype. As the regions above were unpropitious, I thought it advisable to visit the gorge below Gulmerg, from which it is possible to reach the Ferozepore nullah and the snow bridge. It has often appeared to me a strange trait in human nature that love that seems so ingrained in most people of a "name," call the most glorious mountain path "a pass" without surname, and none will feel interested in visiting it. A mountain will remain unclimbed if it cannot boast an imposing title. For this reason every one considered it part of the correct routine of Gulmerg to visit the Ferozepore nullah. Beautiful as it is, there are probably a dozen spots round Gulmerg as fair, but lacking the distinction of a name. I was sufficiently led away by the popular notion of an excursion to start out with the intention of visiting the famous stream, but being but vaguely instructed in the route to follow, and only meeting with coolies who neither spoke my language nor knew of the place under that name, I strayed away, and, slipping down grassy slopes, clambering over boulders, making my way up snow-bound streams, I spent twice as happy a day as I should have done if following the direct path, amid the loneliness of the vast woods, the colossal trees reaching away to unfathomable green vaults overhead, their roots hidden in a carpet of forget-me-nots, alkanets, stitchworts, and delicate fern tangles!

The air was as strong and uplifting in its quality as that breathed among the Alps. Free

and untrammelled, even the fact of following a made footpath seemed an unbearable bondage; it was better to find new tracks, following fancy. To strange pitfalls was I led, one steep slope making a splendid if unexpected glissade, and I arrived below suddenly, like a swift spirit among some frightened sheep, and startled their wild keepers. A conversation usually occurs when folk are thus landed face to face, but, alack! we had no common tongue. Certain feminine tastes are a good starting-point for common understanding even when speech is wanting, and my admiration of the lady shepherdesses' rough corals and blue beads led to an examination of my small trinkets, and some desire to know the whence and whither of my wanderings. I, in turn, questioned by gesture, and found they were taking herds from the villages to the upper grazing grounds. Lusty, happy folk they seemed, not too clean and savoury, but with a fine conceit of themselves and their work.

They conversed much, with a happy belief so universally possessed by the uneducated that the higher culture must endow with a universal power of understanding tongues. Peasants on the Italian-French frontier speaking uncouth *patois*, Kerry peasants with none of the English, Bhils from Central India, the strange tribesmen of the Kashmir frontier, all alike will chatter without misgiving as to their intelligibility, and doubtless a certain meaning filters through, aided by gesture and expression. They are cheerful ruffians these Gujars, have a contempt for all professions save their own, and are dirty, dishonest, with a dash of the spirit of enterprise and adventure at variance with the typical Kashmiri. They possess, too, the hospitable

spirit that comes from sojourning in solitary places where strangers are a welcome diversion and food hard to come by, and they brought forth milk and butter, not in a lordly dish, but in a very dirty earthen vessel. I refused, knowing that these people have a taste for ripe flavours, and like their dairy produce in the "fine old crusted" state.

Eventually, more by good luck than good management, I struck the Ferozepore nullah, and walked beside

Group of Gujars

its rushing waters, rejoicing in the coolness, and eventually, after some rough walking, arrived at the snow bridge, a poor thing and hopelessly begrimed, and I once more wondered at the attraction of a "named" goal for most human beings. More scrambling followed, and was rewarded with peeps of snow peaks, Haramuk pre-eminent, when the transparencies of mist that were

constantly gathering were torn aside for a few minutes. They were fine samples of scenery that I saw that afternoon, made up of snowy drifts, summer fields, stately forests, large flowering shrubs, scarred hillsides, where it was necessary to move with painful care among the rolling stones and sharp rocks left by the movement of some ancient glacier, and grass slopes starred with thousands of blooms. Saving the Gujars seen in the morning, I met no human being, but never did I feel less lonely and seldom less weary, my leather sandals being equally cool, light, and capable of clinging when either treacherous grass or slippery stones had to be negotiated.

When after some eight hours of tramping I reached my tents again, I was glad I had been away, for things at the camp had not cheered. The servants had found the grain to be much more expensive than at Srinagar, and refused to be comforted though offered higher pay. The cook declared that not only his arms were affected, but he could no longer use his legs (I had seen him briskly walking towards my tent before doubling up to impress me with his suffering state); even "Mike Kuti" (the dog Mike) was suffering from rheumatism. Moreover, only one egg had been brought in, and the kettle had knocked a hole in itself by falling off its rocky perch. All these lesser ills were forgotten in the speedy preparations necessary against the advent of a wild storm of thunder and rain, the deafening roar as it echoed from hill to hill seeming unceasing. For one hour and a half the sound continued without break, merely rising and dying away alternately; troughs had to be made round the tents to carry off the water, and our ground was little better than a quagmire.

At intervals during the night the soughing of the wind, the swish of the rain, the sound of the swift stream—swollen far beyond its normal size—replaced the soft mutterings of the woodland heard during the preceding night, and effectually prevented sleep, so that I was quite ready to dress by daybreak and be off on the chance of a sight of Nanga Parbat, in case he should reveal himself as is his wont in the early morning sunlight.

Floods of rain blotted out all view, and kept me in my tent during the greater part of the day, and reduced me to that becoming state of humility in which one welcomes a moment or too of sunlight as an unexpected blessing, and a dry islet anywhere as a realm of the blessed. My *entourage* said so visibly by their expression, "We told you so," that my pride forbade me ordering a move to drier regions. Moreover, I had all along felt that Nanga Parbat was the shrine of my pilgrimage, and, as it was impossible to get a nearer view without many long and very difficult marches, necessitating a far larger staff than I possessed, I felt obliged either to wait with patience till he chose to reveal himself to his waiting worshipper, or own myself conquered by circumstances.

Towards sunset a slight improvement set in, the weather faired, and with skirts tucked high and discarding my sandals for boots, I marched round the circular road that rings the hillside below Gulmerg to see if the sudden severing of the clouds would reveal some of the distant ranges. The air came up from the valley below in puffs of damp heat, the true breath of the sodden rice fields then in their "searage," as they say in my own country at home. At moments the thick

View from circular road, Gulmerg

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mugginess of the atmosphere choked and clogged the lungs, but these periods were compensated for by a swift gust clearing the intervening strata, tearing open a wide peephole through which vista the lower country could be seen, the kind of view that new inmates of the heavenly regions rejoice in when thoughts fly back to the comrades left below and their surroundings. Mile after mile I could see of winding river, the Jhelum rushing down between flower-besprent banks and rock enclosures, the silver sheet of the Wular glistening in the uncertain sunlight, a mirror at the foot of vast crags that lifted jagged rocks and naked peaks heavenwards. Later on, as the sky showed primrose and pink above the tall pines that thrust their tops over two hundred and fifty feet into the air, a shadow rose high above the smaller ranges that made a triple barrier between the river and its towering heights, and Nanga Parbat showed himself! It was but a fleeting vision, and before I could thoroughly realise that I had seen his sacred heights the vision faded, and I could scarcely understand if I had seen aught, or whether the whole impression had not been the materialisation of my desire. When next I saw it I knew my eyes had not deceived me, but I stood lingering there in the hope that another sight might be granted me, till startled by a raucous, reproachful voice behind me, and turned to find my faithful body-guard had come to search for me, fearing evening damp might be harmful, and reminding me that my bath and a dinner had been ordered for an earlier hour.

I turned away, feeling all the humiliation an absent-minded dreamer is continually subject to when dwelling with those who have less wandering wits. These get all

the small change out of life; indeed, life would come abruptly to a close were not folks at hand to grease its wheels with food and drinks and such like, but I am not sure that the receivers of the small coin do not forego the big drafts, which, coming at long intervals, repay for the intervening blanks. Some prefer a perpetual trickle of pleasant liquid. I like my thirst appeased in occasional big draughts from foaming tankards, otherwise life loses its relief and becomes an unpleasantly colourless monotone.

CHAPTER XVII

There are mirrors of crystal shining,
  Whenever the cloud-wrack breaks,
And grass-clad banks are tiering
  A wreath of the fairy lakes,
Lakes that are links in an endless chain,
  For the water is out in the swamp again.
—*Will Ogilvie.*

This is the sort of thing that readily begets a personal feeling against nature.—*Stevenson.*

To escape damp I climb to greater elevations—Meet storms and stones—Return to the shelter of trees and sing the praises of botany.

THEN followed a wearisome succession of days spent in wandering forth, receiving the contents of the celestial tanks, and returning to attempt drying in a soaking tent with no more adequate flooring than a boggy soil and a muddy scrap of carpet. There are moments when one would prefer to be the lowest of the sponges than to rank highly in the scale of life and have no means of ridding one's self of superfluous damp. I suffered, struck out new lines of aches and pains, sat sorrowfully watching the slow submersion of the merg as it was reduced to a quaking morass, finally settled that, despite showers and such malignities of the weather deities, I

would start next day to visit the snow-capped summits that had long overshadowed my tents with the sullen grandeur of their grey crags and snow-bound streams.

The distance did not appear very great, but I had grown wary about deciding offhand the length of routes, and fortunately started soon after my early cup of tea. There was a severe touch in the air then, a smack of winter that braced the muscles, tinctured the blood with the strength of the mountain air, and put trilling notes into a voice not usually prone to sing! The climb was steep from the set-off, there was scarcely a track through the trees, and the spreading roots seeking firm foothold made in places a network, freed from the soil, skilful to catch the unwary foot. At times there was an interlude of grass among the closely-growing trees, in colour vivid almost to dazzling after the sombre shades in the forest, the flowers themselves taking a more brilliant hue as the higher levels were reached. Tiny androsace jewelled the loose soil between the stones, while anemones, alkanets, and myosotis of many varieties, starred the grasses with the brilliancy of cut gems. Under the trees were other treasures of ever-varying hues, small mauve primula giving place to the larger purple varieties, with bold white eyes and an independent sturdiness of stem—flowers beloved of the hill dwellers, who gaily deck with them their sad-coloured homespun caps—and higher still, the "crimson snow," the exquisite *primula rosea* that scarcely waits the melting of the frost to peer forth and show its ruddy trusses of delicate bloom. A small merg is the first opening reached, and their flocks of ponies were grazing. The sound of a sawmill at work gave a pleasant suggestion of labour, always agreeable to personal idleness,

Apharwat from Gulmerg

and all near things were full of beauty and small interests. The distant ranges across the valley remained invisible, blotted out by damp mists as I took a few minutes' rest for breath, for the height tells on the lungs even here, though not ten thousand feet up. The sycamore disappeared above this, and the trees were almost entirely pines, and mixed with a few stunted birch. Seeing light above me through the thinning trees I made a spurt, and Killenmerg was reached. The sun is one of those sociable companions that is so invariably looked to, to share the traveller's emotions that his full power to cheer and encourage are not realised till withdrawn, and seldom have desolation and loneliness weighed more on my spirits that on my arrival that dull day at the rock-strewn slope above Gulmerg. The elevation is trying to heart and head, and the darts and stabs that mark the drawing of each breath, and the dizzy singing that obscures the sight, conduce to a weighty depression, clogging the footsteps, and generally causing the death of all energetic effort.

Far below, the little wooden shanties of Gulmerg could be seen, but mist continued to stop all distant views. Above, Apharwat looked strangely grey and forbidding, its steep sides offering nothing less rugged than boulders and ice as stepping-stones. A vast moraine crossed the merg, obliging me to climb over the rocks, with difficulty avoiding a slip that would have caused an undignified and painful descent between sharp edges and perhaps broken limbs, a difficult situation when the largeness and loneliness of that rocky field was considered. Through some such stone-strewn field Childe Roland must have passed on his solitary ride to

the lone tower, and if his spirits were not sore cast down, he must have been a man all muscle and no nerve!

A cold wind blew at times in short, sharp gusts, confusing and wearisome as I struggled to keep my precarious foothold over the mighty rocks, buffeting me so that I could with difficulty draw breath, and could only wonder wearily at the tireless energy of the wind and its persistent power, and strike out blindly. Breathless and panting I reached the further side, and taking refuge under some stunted bushes, was pleased to find that, though progress had seemed slow, I had succeeded in passing the greater part of the way to the rise leading to Apharwat, and that once under the lee of the hill I should be protected from the wind.

Meantime I sat and watched the various flowers that brightened this blossoming land, fritillaries of dusky tones hung their heads from their slim green stalks, showing lurid spots and blotches when the light shone through. Pink androsace made a soft, sweet carpet under the dure rocks, and gorgeous golden anemones struck a cheerful note, they alone having caught and kept some light when the sun had last shone on the grey slope. Tiny ferns forced their way through the hard soil, and a variety of minute sedums and saxifrages gave their aid in the embellishment of the drear scene. Time was pressing, and the steepest of the track had yet to be surmounted, so I trudged on, and having reached the zigzag track which marks the next stage of the climb, was considerably humbled to find how narrow the merg was in reality, though taking so much time in the crossing.

Freed from the fatiguing wind and the hindering stones, I made better progress, and found myself much aided by the manufacture of land marks to cheer me on.

A hoary tree, partly disembowelled by the wild tempests, was noted and climbed to, then a great plant of rhubarb was marked down, and just when my energies began again to flag an unusual spot of light colour on the hillside raised my curiosity. I had first to decide whether it were a living thing or blocks of masonry. A few moments of scramble, and the manufactured theory was abandoned. Then came the question whether they were fagots piled there by coolies ready for transport down or flowers. Undoubtedly there were flowers, bunches of them, what joy! a great bank of rhododendrons, the beautiful leaves with brown velvet lining, a fitting background to the heads of soft pink blossoms. What strange accident had resulted in this beauty spot in the bleak, drear hillside none could tell, on a height but seldom and for short periods free from snow and frost. They were flourishing as cheerily and flowering as bountifully as in the most favoured home gardens.

It was impossible not to be moved by such a discovery, beauty cut off from all *camaraderie* is always pathetic, and these flowered lonely and unseen, save by a chance wanderer who preferred his own path rather than to follow in others' footsteps. The delicacy and abundance of the bloom, though hampered by the blasts of fierce tornados and the long continued winter frosts, was a vastly cheering sight, like the chance meeting with a kind friend when adrift in an unknown desert, and I have seldom felt so deeply in Nature's debt as I did that day, and naught wherewith to pay the debt! As some equivalent an undying memory and a thankful spirit may be counted. From that spot upward there was little to mark save increasing steepness, rough stones, added difficulty in breathing. It was past mid-

day when the summit was reached, and hot and with scanty breath I lay down on the short, stunted heather and wondered why, hopeless of views without any particular inducement, a summit, any summit, almost invariably drew me up, though the climbing was painful and the goal showed not a tithe of the beauties left behind. Perhaps a feeling that enduring unnecessary discomforts will one day be accounted to us for righteousness; perhaps a good self-conceit that will rejoice over the fact of "going one better" than our neighbours; likeliest of all, the merest chance of seeing a little further afield may be accounted sufficient magnet. That day I was not destined to be rewarded for my climb, for a rather bitter, withering blast caught me once more and made the dreary walk over boulder-strewn fields but more depressing; my toes were sore within the leather chaplis I habitually wore, my face felt as if beaten with birches, and the height made head and back ache, but I reached the lonely tarn called the Echo Lake, and felt afraid to raise my voice, fearing to discover my presence to the presiding spirits who seemed so angry and forbidding and warlike.

I only rested long enough to get a fresh supply of breathing power, chumped some hard biscuits, the only edible portion of my lunch left, the satchel containing that and some drawing materials having slipped while crossing the lower moraine, reducing more fragile portions to an unappetising pulp, and then once more I clambered down. I had intended returning by a different route for the sake of seeing other parts of the great forests, but I did not do so, for the sky was fiercely threatening, the wind harried me so as to make thought or observation difficult, and I feared losing the lightly-

marked track. Descents have none of the excitements or thrills of the outward journey, and that day my return seemed three times more dreary than the ascent. I managed to miss the rhododendrons, and took a path obliging me to cross and recross the frozen stream, sinking occasionally in half-melted snow and chilling my feet to almost unbearable numbness, and once more arrived at Killenmerg, a whirlwind caught me, and it was only by roughest battlings and a most determined front to the opposition of the storm that I crossed the moraine and regained the shelter of the forest, where I lay under the shade of a great pine, stupidly abashed at the weakness and small endurance I had shown in accomplishing an unimportant excursion. The weather was my only excuse, and though it was late for such a storm, the coolies who had been watching the hillside from the camp, and who were sent out with tea in the hope of meeting me, acknowledged it to be of wintry power.

More loitering on the summit would have involved me in a duel with hail and thick snow, and next day the side showed white where for some time previously all snow had disappeared. Slowly making my way down, keeping to the shelter of trees and bushes when crossing the smaller mergs, I met the welcome tea bearers, and one or two cups of that wonderful reviver sent up my spirits to beyond even the powers of mercury, and instead of returning immediately, I dawdled slowly along, collecting flowers and filling my nostrils with the fresh forest scents, a fragrance that acts as a stimulant, stirring the pulses to more active life, bracing the muscles to action, sweet tonics that, once inhaled, never again leave wholly the lucky wight who has received

their precious gift. Years after they will still stir his emotions, bring back afresh to his memory echoes of past enjoyments; and, when he is living the sad, sunless life of a western city, will put such an ache into his being, such a home-sickness for beautiful glades and great towering trees to his heart, and bring to his mind such vivid impressions of acrid-scented wood fires, lush wet grasses, and the scents of a thousand flowers that, till the picture is dulled and the feeling numbed by the manifold bonds and tyrannies of a modern existence, he will be willing to cast away all hope of material gain, all ambitions, all petty strivings, and join himself once more to the life of the forests in order to watch again the free, fantastic insect life, the floral wealth, and unfettered, unconfined by walls and streets, to note the gay processions of the seasons—nature's varying fêtes in honour of the fullest perfections of the year.

A really exhaustive catalogue of Kashmirian plants and flowers is badly needed. This is a field for amateurs as yet but little worked, and though a Gulmerg flora has been put together, much still remains to be done by those with eyes and leisure. Many of the hitherto little-known valleys will probably yield rich rewards to the energetic searcher, and even when no new varieties can be added to the world's flora, it is sufficiently cheering to be able to aid those who come after with perhaps less experience and less spare time by correctly naming, describing, and locating those plants already known to exist in this world's garden. It is not an easy matter determining whether the finds are new friends or old under somewhat varying guise, for the circumstances of their growth are so different to aught anywhere else, that they strike very different

notes, and are vastly independent in their colouring and habit; even between the lower and upper parts of the Gulmerg hills the colour and size of the same flower varied greatly, the upper height giving a depth to the tone while diminishing greatly the length of stalk and richness of foliage. Cruciferae are much influenced by their surroundings, and so are caryophyllaceœ, and I gave up any attempts to do more than group them, while the variety of iris and lilies of the valley will be sufficient pabulum for the energies of many enthusiastic botanists for some time to come.

The iris, with their capacity for producing spots, changing their colour, and developing most fragrant odours, are very kittle cattle to deal with, and, till a Michael Foster has time and energy to search through Kashmir, their nomenclature will remain as uncertain a quantity as it is now, and the amateur will be driven to the verge of distraction by efforts to decide conscientiously whether a plant that has varied his hue and lost most of his markings can still be allowed to consider himself of the same class as a gayer brother who has elected to remain in closer proximity to water.

In the course of my wood wanderings that afternoon I collected much—beautiful ornithogalums, two or three daphnes, the tiny gagea lutea, giant crane's bill, a sheaf of iris, great heads of the blue Jacob's ladder, anemones of four different colours, and varieties of primula, myosotis, mertensia, and bugloss galore, small white labiatae, always dull and forbidding in smell, pretty yellow geums, Solomon's seal, eremurus, late violets, and the brilliant viola biflora, and very handsome representatives of pedicularis, pink, mauve, and yellow. But the real difficulty of the work is not the collecting, it is

the safe conveyance to the camp, in a condition in which they can be examined, the trying of the eyes in a badly-lighted, close tent when too windy or too wet to work out of doors, the impossibility of finding a really dry case, or, when travelling quickly and lightly, finding time or opportunity of renewing papers, without which precaution one is certain to lose the greater part of the specimens by mould. Insects, too, are very destructive, in fact all the forces of the atmosphere and of animal life array themselves against the collector, and it is decidedly advisable, if time will only allow, to make a sketch of each individual flower, with an accurate description written below. However roughly executed, they will prove a better guide than mouldy and mutilated vegetables.

Beautiful and characteristic are these flowers, supplying a sympathetic, cheering background to the most depressing and dreariest hours of camp life; still, they never take the big place in one's life that the forest trees do. Years ago I read a story in which the trees played the principal parts, and spending many days and nights alone under their shade, it was difficult to refrain from gifting them with human traits and qualities. Among the principal varieties I knew were the blue pines, so tall and stately, kindly generous in their gifts of shade and shelter, like large natures appealed to by the weak; the vast chenaars, with trunks huge enough to be used as halls, so full of life that they continue cheerfully and proudly to put forth, spring after spring, green mantles of delicately-shaped leaves though their stems are hollowed, and three hundred years of life have robbed them of much vigour; the gigantic "brimij" (*Celtis*

australis), with roughly scored bark and spreading foliage capable of sheltering an army; the walnuts and mulberries, shady and fruitful, ready to aid the hard life of the people by their bountiful stores of food-stuffs; the dainty birch brightening by its vivid tints the sombre, dim mountain sides, and supplying, through its light bark, a ready-made, efficient wrapping paper. Poplars, slender to attenuation, thick foliaged and quick growing, providing speedily a pleasant shade for hot, dusty tracks, and the Aesculus Indica, with a more delicate leaf and daintier outline than our representative horse chestnut, also countless smaller trees, many boasting handsome flowers: buckthorns, spindle trees, elders, viburnums, laurels, bays, willows, mountain ashes, hawthorns, hazels, lording it over the lowlier herbs—as the fashion is with lesser lights when their grander companions are absent.

Wandering about among these trees, I took note of their cranks and quirks, their rough skins and unexpected excrescences, in the same way as constant companionship tends to intimate study of character. Their looks were as readily recognised, and their various qualities appreciated, as are those of people in whom we daily depend. The natives knew a good deal about the properties of the trees and plants, and if one can identify their names, a great deal may be learnt from them. They have a thorough appreciation of their beauty as well as utility, and often their window gardens in the towns are as bright as a Londoner's, while the country folk will wear them or take infinite trouble to pick bouquets to present to the passing wayfarer.

Blessed is the man with a hobby, thrice blessed if the hobby happens to be botany! What more could be

wished for than a study, the materials for which may be garnered by every roadside, in the roughest of gardens, the poorest of houses? If its sorrow and disappointments are numerous and bitter, few things in life can be more exhilarating than the finding of a rare specimen, the discovery of a new variety, and if, as Stevenson opined, Solomon merely noted the superlative pleasures of literature when he said, "of making books there is no end," the botanical student can rejoice in a taste which need never fear termination from want of nourishment or novelty. A blade or two of grass and a glass has kept me quiet and amused during a long journey, and I have known a severe fit of the blues cured by the smiling countenance of a new anemone, while many weary hours of *ennui* have had an exhilarating excitement imparted to them by the comparing of specimens, a sister student, and the rivalry arising therefrom.

My wanderings that afternoon after my descent from Apharwat had not taken me far from my direct path, but I must own to a cowardly prolonging of them, for the grumblings of my servants had become a distinct annoyance. Nor was I to be spared by the mere fact of returning late. The grievances were all ready for me if I had shown the slightest sympathy, and the continued damp and late cold were no doubt causing some real suffering. It was difficult to make up my mind to leave without a full vision of Nanga Parbat, so I decided to give him the chance of one day more on which to appear, and then, if he still continued obdurate, I determined to march back to the valley. Time was pressing, and I had but ten days before I was due in Pindi.

CHAPTER XVIII

King amidst kingly mountains,
  Monarch o'er snowy heights,
Girdled with glacial fountains,
  Fenced by avalanche might,
Battlements lowering skywards,
  Pinnacles glistening bright,
Who shall dispute Dyamir
  The crown that's thine by right?

—*J. R.*

Wishing for a day of experiences—I have one superfluous emotion—Later I achieve the second object of my pilgrimage—An unrestful mount—Other folks' facts about the fauna of the land.

As it was likely to be my last day of a free and open life, I determined that, so far as weather permitted, I would do my best to go through the whole gamut of sylvan enjoyments, and perhaps it was out of kindness and consideration that the clerk of the weather withdrew the rain clouds and allowed the sun to shine forth and dry up some of the vast lakes that had formed in the merg. As I wished to make the day as long as possible, I was afoot betimes and up through the woods to Killenmerg. The dew-besprent primulas glittered in the early sunlight, the cobwebs were decked with a thousand jewels; even the dusky fritillaries took a gay hue as their heavy

bell heads swung in the light breeze, displaying the sparkling drops in their depths. I looked across the broad valley, and greatly did I rejoice to see, shadowy and mist-enveloped, but unmistakable as ever, the outline of great Nanga Parbat. It only remained distinct for about twenty minutes, and then, as the sun rose higher in the heavens, faded away into a vague pink haze. Greatly cheered by the vision, the longest I had yet had of that glorious peak, I started on a journey of exploration to the westward of the merg, and as not infrequently happens while devoid of all thought of danger, nearly had a bad accident, the only real *contretemps* during my wanderings.

The hillsides were in places very steep. At one point a kind of rough shoot had been formed by some old avalanches, and the soil, a loose shale, was treacherous and crumbling. Some way down on one side beneath some hardy shrubs I spied, as I imagined, a rare orchid, and decided to try and capture it. I was obliged to clamber down on the further side from the plants, and then to cross the slide. There was nothing to hold to, and in an instant I felt the whole mass moving beneath me. I made a great effort by the help of my stick to reach the further side, lost my foothold, my stick was torn from my grasp, and with a dizzy motion down I went, a hailstorm of loose clods and stones about me. What added to the unpleasant sensation was the knowledge that some five hundred feet lower there were a slippery slab of rock and a sheer drop. I did not think much, but I had the impression of being pelted by energetic demons with rock, while the world slipped from under me. A tree trunk stopped the way—a huge blue pine uprooted, and luckily lying across my impetuous

Nanga Parbat

course. I loved the blue pines before; I now owe them a gigantic debt of gratitude.

The descent having been stopped, the difficulty was to return. There was not the slightest track, and the hill was literally like the side of a house. My sandals had been almost torn off my feet, my skirts were suggestive of the wandering minstrel's garb, my solar topee was a broken relic, and face and hands suggested a bear's greeting. Somehow I clambered up, chiefly by my hands, for my ankles were weak and strained, and arriving above, shamefacedly edged round the merg, hidden by the woods from the unsympathetic sight of man! A warm tub did much to relieve the soreness after my too close embrace of Mother Earth, and fresh garments and soothing ointment to my face restored my self-respect. Breakfast having put fresh life into me, I determined to carry out such parts of my programme for the day as I was capable of.

My men, who forgot their own grumblings and misery directly I was in difficulties, improvised an excellent dandy or carrying chair, and bore me away to a small height to the south of the merg, from which I knew a grand view could be obtained, and I was not disappointed. Towards mid-day, peak after peak appeared, range behind range showed glistering, and when all the ranks of snow heights were uncovered, there arose, ninety miles away as the crow flies, great Nanga Parbat, nearly twenty-seven thousand feet, one of the great triad of mountains that dominate the world. I had never before seen anything like it!

I tasted eternity that day, and felt myself immortal because I had realised the everlasting

hills. Few things in this life have the power to hold and possess without dispute mind and memory, but never can anything replace that vision, and if when this "passing shadow," this short breath of life is over, I rise to other existences, this memory will endure as a haunting sense of kinship with heights and stainless fields of snow. Beyond the shimmering river and the smooth surface of the Wular, silvery in the dazzling sunlight, rose the lesser heights of the Tragbal, and behind heights with numbers for names. Further east that rugged giant Haramuk, threw his rocky summit seventeen thousand feet to the sky, to be overtopped further round to the south by the beautiful Mahadeo's sacred triple peak (Mahadeo, the creator god, who is three gods), the Gwash Brari or Kolahoi, nearly eighteen thousand feet, and the peak of Amarnath sheltering its pilgrim cave. To the south was the Pir Panjâl, named from the Dogra and Kashmiri words for peaks, "Poi" and "Pantsal," and the passes by which the traveller marches into the Poonch country, but often as the eye strayed it returned always to that north-western corner where Nanga Parbat raised its massive head and shoulders, the key of that mysterious massif, the "roof of the world." Beneath its quiet snows lie the bones of those who timorously have attempted to pass up it; its beauties are only for those who are content to view from afar, and, cheered by the vision, keep the memory to help them when circumstances and environment are changed, and sordid surroundings and daily scenes of struggle and surrender require that the mind should possess some sedative as an antidote against unconquerable weariness.

Early in the afternoon the ranges had been clear cut as crystals, a great diamond chain for Mother Earth, but towards evening a shimmering on the edges, a softening of outline wrought by faint veilings of vague mist clouds—pink, purple, blue—indicated that the moment for the curtain to drop would soon arrive. From deepest blue the sky changed to a lighter hue, and then to pink and primrose, and the hills so white imitated the delicate tints. Presently all the lower heights were wiped out, hidden in blue haze, and the second range began also to disappear. A pink cloud was concentrated on great Diyamir, "seat of gods" (Kash. for Nanga Parbat). The slope below me was hidden by mirk shadows, behind me were the forbidding wintry heights of Apharwat, the valley below had covered its spring crops under a ghostly mist, and yonder, far away, was the promised land, the shrine to gain sight of which I had come so far.

It must have been under similar circumstances that Moses viewed the Promised Land, and, seeing below him summer fields, and with his back to the drear heights he had passed over, looked to the distant ranges of hills shining in the glow of the setting sun, glorious in purples, mauves, blues, and pinks, flooded in golden light, one perhaps like Diyamir, greater than the others, like some protecting strong presence, its might half-veiled by soft fleecy clouds. Then with appetite whetted by such a banquet of sweet sights, he was compelled to turn back, with the hosts he had led, to where, against a sullen sky, dark grey rocks scarred by frozen streams, and the rugged, torn tops of huge dark pines reared their heads and they once again wearily entered their tiny tents,

their only refuge against rains and wintry blasts, the only places they could call home till the day of "great deliverance" should dawn and another path be shown them whereby they could win their way to those snowy hills without fear or fatal falling from the law. Now, as then, such renunciations are being enacted among the dark places of the earth; for their own or others' sins, pilgrims within sight of their long-sought goal must turn away, and on stony altars wet with blood-like tears, offer sad sacrifices, sanctified by self-devotion, solemnised by the simple faith that commands them.

In spite of its untoward commencement, this had been a "day of days," my last one among the hills, and the night was hardly less beautiful. Softly the stars twinkled, and then their light was wiped out by the greater radiance of the moon, a moon that, peering first between the dark pine stems, gave cheery greeting to all who had sense to remain awake to fête it. With the flap of my little tent wide open I watched her playing hide and seek in the forest, then, mounting to her throne in the open heaven, saw her shine in dignified solitude, flooding the open merg with a glittering sheen, which outlined even tiny flowers into an unreal relief. The stream below the camp, swollen by the late rains, made a companionable sound, and the grazing ponies seemed pleasant fellows. All living things and trilling brooks and whispering pines were alive that night. Boon companions were flowers and trees, rushing waters, chill snows, and melting ice, the grazing herds and tiny insects being all partners in a great festive confederacy, smiled on by the moon, encouraged by the cheery, saucy "lesser lights," who were quite ready to take again their places and illuminate the world when she had set.

In spite of the change for the better in the weather, the morrow witnessed my departure. Time was pressing, some of the servants were really ill, and it was necessary to make arrangements for the transport of my goods out of Kashmir. In spite of a certain stiffness from my yesterday's glissade I walked, and as I descended to the lower levels, the steamy heat of the rice fields, and the rough, uninteresting road, I was cheered by more views of "great Diyamir," and looked my last on that vast peak. I shall not see his like again, and I went forward with that sense of intimate loss and deep sorrow as when a loved sympathetic soul passes from our life. I had seen it, so one desired end had been accomplished; but an influence had passed, a pleasure faded, my lonely wanderings were drawing to a close, and humdrum life would have to be once more endured.

The heat was greater than when I had ascended to Gulmerg, and, still somewhat stiff and sore, I decided, if possible, to obtain a pony. Once more I was deluded by the optimism of my attendants!

In temperament they resembled the Portuguese devils of legendary fame. If life for a few minutes ran off the greased track, no evils were too enormous for them to expect; but, once again on the right road, their hopes took the definite outlines of accomplished facts, and expectation and realisation were one! At the mention of ponies on arrival at Mágam, I imagined, from the answers to my inquiries, that the route was cropped with them, all possessing side saddles of the latest pattern! Cheered by these hopes, I prepared to roost, and realised the poor exchange I had made in regaining choking walls, fly-filled rooms, and the stuffy valley atmosphere in place of the vast sleeping-

chamber, a small corner of which I had occupied in the hillside, where, without trouble and without cost, the lights had been hung out nightly, the carpet swept and washed, where the air was always fresh, and the perfumes strong and invigorating. Early next morning, very early, every one was afoot, for the certainty of our march being a hot one was an inducement to get it over as soon as possible, and after an unsatisfactory breakfast of stewed tea and smoked toast, I demanded my pony. Then there was scuffling and evasion—a suggestion that it had not been really expected I would ride, as my habit was to walk. Finally, as I grew stern, a shaggy white thing was produced — ewe - necked, ungroomed, and bearing, in ridiculous disproportions to the breadth of its back, a tiny man's saddle, bare, uncompromising, not even a native one, which would have afforded some grip for the knee.

On almost any other march in Kashmir I would have risked a cross seat, but the gay Srinagar world was just beginning to move up to Gulmerg, and I dared not; as I did actually meet the Resident and his party in all the state of "official progress," I was thankful not to have given way to an impulse of comfort. Somehow or other, I accomplished the twenty-three miles—my destination was a long way on the other side of Srinagar —sitting sideways on that minute and slippery triangle of leather. The first shy nearly sent me to leeward, also a curious habit of tacking that my mount had whenever advancing on an object that displeased him, and which was very disconcerting. Practice is everything, and as I was petrified with my cramped position, even that became less trying, and finally, even if I had wished, I could not have come off, so thoroughly had I grown to my unpleasing saddle.

The sun was trying and my head ached from the glare and the bump gained in my unlucky glissade, and it was with a vast relief I saw before me, towards two o'clock, pretty Gupcar with its picturesque bungalows and shady plantations. Half of the value of roughing it is the enjoyment of easeful comfort afterwards, and that afternoon beneath shady walnuts, with many cushions in place of the unreposeful saddle, will long remain to me a synonym of luxury! The house itself was typically Kashmirian—pretty in design, full of repose, ornamental and tasteful, every part, of course, leaked when it rained, and none of the windows or doors could be tightly closed—such trifles do not enter into a native's scheme of existence. If it is warm, doors and windows must be open, and when it is cold, what easier than to roll up in homespuns and furs, and hedge round the shivering body with "kangars" of hot charcoal! What is time, exactitude, punctuality? say they; merely a triad of annoyances invented by Sahibs and their folk wherewith to worry poor "naukar lôg" (serving people). Living that life of *dolce far niente* by the beautiful Dal Lake, the Takht-i-Suleiman high above, the Pir Panjâl still lightly crowned by snows, time even to me became a thing of no importance, one day was as another, "like beads in careless teller's hands, the hours dropped unconsidered by." My luggage was despatched, with the vague assurance that if it did not arrive in ten days at Pindi, it would be there in a fortnight, provided always cart and car tents were not tumbled down the river bank. My seat was booked for a mail tonga, or "some other tonga," provided there was room, and I began to collect those of my orders that the merchants had thought fit to complete.

The greater part were unfinished, others had been varied to suit the taste of the artist. When this tallied with my preconceived notion I took the proffered merchandise, and must acknowledge that all the purchases I brought away with me have been things of joy and enjoyment to me ever since. Where execution was far from original design I politely refused, and, as this is the understood agreement, none were disappointed or annoyed, and buyer and seller retained that independence which we as a people have such scant patience for when exhibited by others than ourselves! An expedition on the lake occupied one of my last days. There the glorious lotus was in full beauty, and held aloft their great crimson heads above the long-stemmed, cup-like leaves, and swayed and swung gently in the breeze, filling the air with their almond fragrance, and standing out like flames from the dense greenery of the lake growths.

Then, as befitted an idle person "floating careless on a silver sea," I had much talk with a "shikari" of his deeds of "derring-do." He had known the valley when the rocks "crawled with ibex," and barasingh and other deer were of no account in the land. The falling into abeyance of the wise game laws of the late Maharajah did much towards the extermination of the game, and this has been accelerated by many sportsmen, unworthy of the name, who have been guilty of such wholesale slaughter as driving deer in the snows, while the native shikari and villagers, anxious for food or gain, have netted for the sake of the meat or the trophies large quantities of the finer species. Now game laws and licences have been introduced, and it is to be hoped that the number of game animals will cease to decrease.

Every help is given by the hospitable Maharajah and

his State authority to the genuine sportsmen, and some of the finest stalking in the world may be enjoyed at almost nominal outlay if the initial cost of arriving at the good grounds is excluded. For this reason it is best to wait till five or six months can be set aside for shooting if expense has to be considered, then good ground some distance from the main valley can be reached, and if content to remain more or less within touch of the base camp, large supplies need not be moved, and the first cost of coolies and ponies, licences, etc., are soon covered by the tiny outlay for keeping "life alive" in those parts.

The life is not at all too rough for any woman with ordinary health and ordinary appreciation of out-door things, and, without attempting the more difficult stalks, sufficient exercise and occupation can be had accompanying her mankind in their near shoots, perhaps carrying a rifle herself for bear, and looking after the camp arrangements, mending, making, washing, if domestically inclined, sketching, photographing, or botanising, if tastes run on other lines. A friend accompanied her husband and another gun to Baltistan, and she told me that during her six months she never knew a dull moment. She shot three bears, and accompanied many of the stalks after ibex and markhor, sketched, sewed, washed, read, and wrote, and in spite of being far from strong, and recently recovered from a very terrible accident, did not know a day's ill health.

The following notes about the chief game animals were given me by a shikari friend, with many descriptions of exciting chase, and are in accord with what Colonel Ward, the great authority on Kashmir sport, says on the same subject. I would also add that good

native shikaris, though scarce and demanding high wages, are to be obtained, and are reliable and honest. They are generally only known to the "old hands," who are inclined to keep them as a "close corporation," but an introduction works wonders in the East, and no big expedition should be undertaken without obtaining the advice of one who knows the country, and can put the novice up to the ropes.

Leopards are scarce in the valley, the snow leopard (ounce) almost unknown, and my friend considered that a leave of three months had been well spent, as he captured one nearly at the end of the time. Somewhere beyond the limits of Kashmir their skin is very handsome, and makes a beautiful trophy. The curious want of unanimity among specialists as to the real differences between the leopard and panther inclines the outsider to the belief that the points of divergence have been merely engendered by different circumstances of life. Wolves are also rare, though a variety of the black sort is often obtained in the tablelands beyond the Zogi Là; but the jackal, hardly worthy of the name of game animal, is very common, and their dismal nocturnal cries added a strange dreariness to the surroundings of a lonely camp up the valley. Foxes are fairly common, and are much valued for their very beautiful skins, wherefore the "Loh" has little chance of escaping the poaching villager with an eye to gain, rugs and cloaks of their fur commanding good prices in the city. Of bears ("harpat," in Kashmirian parlance) there are two varieties—the black bear (*Ursus tibetanus*), so called because it does not exist there, and the red bear, the "lal harbat" of the native. The former are still to be got in fair quantities, and are unpleasant

A Kashmir valley

neighbours to the villagers, who never fail to warn you against them if wandering out alone in the vicinity of fruit trees or crops after sundown. They are particularly fond of mulberries, and apparently the cloying sweetness of this fruit does not pall on their palates. They are not large, as a rule, though, I believe, some have been shot over six feet in length, and are not really dangerous except when attacked. Like some so-called wild beasts, they are always far more anxious to avoid than to attract notice, and are chiefly annoying to the natives from their ample capacity for fruits and grains. The natives are fond of attributing to them human attributes—rather, vices; this may account partly for their fear of them!

I was told of a strange and terrible encounter between one of these, who had killed a native hunter, and an English sportsman, an exceptionally powerful fellow. He had fired, hitting, but not stopping the bear, who came on him so suddenly and fiercely that the rifle was knocked from his hands, and escape was impossible. He grappled with his fearful antagonist, attempting to strangle him, while the bear clawed his arm. Aided by the bear's weakened condition, the powerful fingers effectually choked the life out of the creature, and the officer was victorious at the cost of a mauled face and shattered arm. He escaped blood poisoning, an unusual thing, for a bear's claws are even more poisonous than a tiger's, only to lose his life a little later on an unknown South African battlefield. He was "missing," and never heard of again.

The red bear is far more uncommon, remaining high up, and killing cattle that feed near the snows. When in good condition it makes a splendid trophy, being of great size, and the pelt very thick and handsome.

Of all the game animals in the valley, the splendid varieties of wild goat are the most interesting, but to use an Irishism, they are generally obtained outside the limits of Kashmir in Astor, Chilas, and Baltistan. Still good markhor are to be shot in the Pir Panjâl and other high grounds to the south-east, the finest heads having been obtained on the Kaj-Nag, a record length of horns being sixty-one inches. They are grand animals, and will repay any one with strength and endurance to follow him into the almost inaccessible fastnesses that he inhabits, for all the fatigues and dangers of the stalk.

The ibex was far more common, but the "kail," as the people call them, are now generally sought for further afield. They yield a far finer head than the European variety, and, like most of the hill goats, have an under hair valuable for making cloth. The "tahr" (*Hemitragus jemlaicus*) is also occasionally met with in the Pir Panjâl, and is a grand-looking animal of some two hundred and fifty pounds weight, with long, venerable beard; but for those who can spare the time, it is more satisfactory to go to other parts in search of them.

Of the genus "cervus," the "barasingh" is by far the handsomest and most representative species, though it is rare for it to act up to its name (the twelve-horned), ten tines being the usual number. During the hot weather, relieved of its horns, it wanders high upon the hillside, returning with new ones in the early autumn. September and October are the best months for securing them. There are State forests specially preserved in the Wangat and at Trahal, and above Atchibal. Their flesh is much valued, and the antlers are a very impressive trophy.

The musk deer is much sought after by reason of

its scent pod, and there is some fear of it being entirely killed out unless a great deal more carefully preserved than at present.

The Indian wild boar (*Sus cristalus*) is common, though generally retiring to heights over three thousand feet during the hot weather. I saw them once or twice. They are much dreaded by the natives, as they do so much damage to the crops. The Dogras and the Sikhs, otherwise not flesh eaters, consider this pork a great delicacy.

Of birds there is great variety, and the game ones are but little diminished, the natives caring for them only for their gay plumage or sweet song, and hardly naming those that do not possess these attractive points. Their orioles and kingfishers, swallows and larks, they love, and would never think of killing, and so, on the whole, the winged class have a happy time.

Of pheasants the most sought after by sportsmen are the ram chikor (*Tetrogallus himalayensis*), the beautiful monaul pheasant (*Lophophorus refulgens*), and the caccabis chukar (the chikor partridge), the only true partridge to be found in Kashmir. The most common of this family is the koklas, that I often met with in the forests, its Latin title being *Pucrasin biddulphi*.

The ordinary pigeon is the *Columba intermedia*, the blue rock pigeon of the plains. There are many handsome varieties less common, the *Columba hodgsoni* and the *C. leuconota*.

The woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) breeds in large quantities in the valley, and then disappears into space, small quantities only being shot. Various other snipe—the common, jack snipe, etc.—are found.

There are many varieties of duck at different seasons and in varying numbers. The mallard, shoveller, brahminy, and blue-winged teal are not very common, but the red-crested pochard (*Branta rufina*), the anthyanyroca, the "harwat" of the natives, and the gadwall are common, also the beautiful pintail (*Dafila acuta*) towards February, when they pause on their way north from India and settle on the tanks and ponds. Large quantities of the grey goose—"aus," as the Kashmirians call them—are very common, but are not of large size. Other geese are found.

These are the chief game birds, and I must ask pardon for treating of them in so summary and dull a manner, but my interest in Kashmir was not with sport, but with nature at peace, and I had few or no means of identifying the many beautiful birds I saw or heard, golden orioles, kingfishers, and such obvious varieties excepted. But as I wish to place as many as possible of the attractive sides of this lovely valley before the reader, I have given this rough list of game birds and "sporting bastes"!

CHAPTER XIX

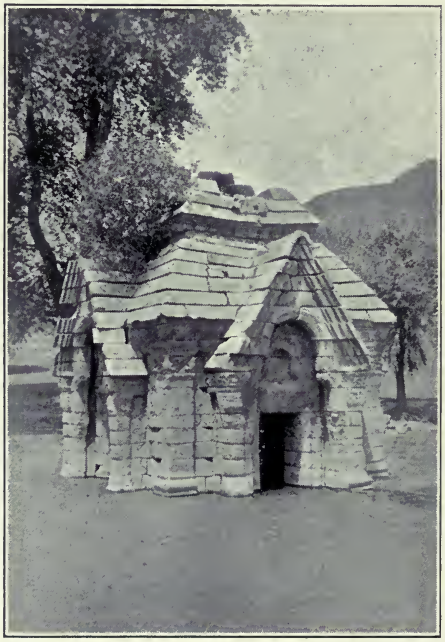
Think in this battered caravanserai,
Whose portals are alternate night and day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his pomp
Abode his destined hour and went his way.
—*Omar Khayyam.*

A few facts, and still fewer names, indicating the history of Kashmir—Kings, ancient and modern, of varying temperaments, ending with a model ruler.

It is a strange thing how well the face of a country may be studied and known, and yet its history but faintly understood. In the course of my tramps I had gathered a few facts about Kashmir, but I really knew but little of its early chronicles or even older traditions, so I was glad of the days of idleness prior to my final departure to study such modern compilations as I could obtain. Most useful of these—and I am glad here to own to my indebtedness—was Mr. Lawrence's splendid work on the land he did so much for. Government reports do not usually err on the side of attractiveness or lucidity so far as the outside reader is concerned, but this one is a model of clearness and conciseness, not to mention the superlative quality of accuracy, and so, though I read many other histories, his notes on the political antecedents of the State, whose financial rescue he achieved,

are so clear and accurate that I feel I cannot do better than briefly summarise them, leaving the befogging names and much controverted dates for the dry-as-dusts who have the leisure and memory to dig into such bewildering matter.

The earliest period about which there are certain facts is that of the Hindu kings. These have left ever-



Pandrethan

lasting memorials in the glorious temples described in an earlier chapter. These give an idea of the wealth and power of this race of kings, and the fact that some of their irrigation canals exist to this day proves that they took an interest in the condition of their people. There

was also at that time a regular system of village administration and a complicated system of bigar (forced labour). It is the written record of this period that we have in the Rajatarangini of Kalhana, a chronicle in Sanskrit verse, the like of which exists for no other part of India. Much of the early part relates events and circumstances of an entirely legendary character; but from the seventh century to the time A.D. 1148, when the author lived in the reign of King Jayasimha, he may be generally relied on. H. H. Wilson states that for a period long antecedent to that chronicled in the Rajatarangini, Kashmir was certainly an organised kingdom bearing the name of Caspapyrus or Abisarius in the time of Herodotus and Alexander, and it is probable that for centuries prior to the time of Greek supremacy the country was governed by princes of the powerful Pandava clan, who, spreading over all north-western India, have left their name more especially to their descendants in the Jhelum Valley.

Whether the fact of Chinese Tartar influence, often referred to by people and writers, rests on any real foundation is difficult now to determine, but it is certain that Buddhism was at a very early date a great power, though it did not retain long its position, for in the seventh century it was already quite subordinate to the Brahminical teaching. As the peaceful influence of this happy vale in those days exercised as soothing an influence as the present time, when Hindus and Mahomedans live peacefully together, the Brahmins and Buddhists agreed to differ without conflict or overheated contention.

Asoka, who lived soon after the beginning of the

Christian era, and is one of the first kings whose history stands out clear of misty legends of demons and snakes, goddesses and strong gods, was a Buddhist and made himself famous by his wise laws and edicts, but his son reverted to the worship of Siva, adopting once more some of the practices of the earlier Nag or snake worship, the traces of which are still to be found in the current religion of the valley. Subsequently the rulers returned to Buddhism, and history becomes misty till there emerges the figure of the ferocious King Mihirakula (515 A.D.), who framed moral codes of a trying nature for his people, and rejoiced in law-breaking, as it gave rise to "pleasant punishments." This Nero was succeeded by Gopaditya, of good reputation, and various other princes of small influence, among whom Mitrigupta seems to have been amiable and charitable.

Eventually Lalataditya came to the throne in 697, and reigned thirty-seven years. We heard of him in connection with the mighty temple of Martand, and throughout his country he built buildings likely to outlast anything their own age, though severely tried by the fierce zeal of fanatics and the terrible powers of Nature doing her worst with earthquake and flood. He helped his people by bringing them water, and he fed vast armies of them. He was a man of mighty deeds and prodigious plans, and, having endowed his kingdom with some of the grandest monuments of the known world, catered for the wellbeing of his subjects, and, it must be also admitted, horrified them by his cruelties when intoxicated (for they seem to have been in the same scale as his benefits when in sober mind), he departed, in spite of prayers and entreaties, for Turkestan, to conquer Central Asia, and there died, having bequeathed

a vast collection of wise laws and sapient observations for the guidance of his successors.

King Avantivarma, of the ninth century, also left a great reputation for sagacity. Though no soldier, he did much towards encouraging useful works in the valley. His son, Shan Karavarman, collected a vast army. We are not told whether his subjects were men of greater mettle than their present representatives, or whether his soldiers were mercenaries, and how his cavalry was mounted. He memorialised himself more thoroughly by the temples he built at Patan. Apparently the army thus assembled, deprived under later kings of legitimate employment, turned its energies to civil wars, and the history of this period is chaotic; rather that word should be applied to the state of the brain after attempting to grapple with its chronicles.

The one distinct figure of the time is that of the Queen Didda, a lady of decided views and undecided principles. Fettered, as others in the like position have been since her time, she set herself to work to rid herself of her *entourage*. Having had much influence during her husband's life, she proceeded after his death to remove her minor son, whose guardian she was supposed to be, also three grandsons; and finally reigned alone and well, so that the kingdom was safeguarded for a time from the internal strife which was the ruin of the dynasty.

The country became more and more disintegrated. Central power was at an end, and at the beginning of the fourteenth century each party, in turns, appears to have put forth a candidate for the governorship, the badge of office being the possession of Kuta Rani, daughter of Ram Chand, commander-in-chief of the last Hindu king.

Finally, this princess killed herself rather than wed the Swati Mussulman Shah Mirza, the first of the Salatin-i-Kashmir. These kings did not worry their subjects much in the matter of religion till we come to the time of the infamous Sikander, nearly a century later than the founder of the dynasty. He, with a thoroughness worthy of a better cause, hoped to bring his subjects eventually to paradise by showing to them in this world all the horrors prepared for the lost, and by a system of conversion, both prompt and forcible, succeeded in turning the greater number into at least nominal followers of the Prophet. Not content with wreaking vengeance on the stiff-necked, he attempted the destruction of the temples that had been the glorious memorials of the earlier kings, not trying with these fanes the system of conversion so effective and successful in other parts of India. The fact that at Martand and Avantipur there still remains some masonry intact is due to no abating of the king's ill-omened zeal, but to the durable nature of the work.

Of a very different type was Zain-ul-ab-ul-din, whose reign of fifty-two years, ending in 1469, brought peace and prosperity to the valley and its peoples. He built great palaces, he regulated the waterways, he encouraged learning, nor did he neglect the many means of pleasure afforded by the lakes and lovely valleys of the kingdom, boating, and travelling, as many a lesser one has done since his time. Tradition has it that the spirit of a Hindu Yogi passed into his body after a severe illness; more probably other loving spirits influenced his character and acts, inducing him to make peace with the Brahmins, the only class of the old Pandits that had made a real stand against the forcible conversions of

Sikander. When this good Sultan died, his kingdom extended over Thibet and the Punjâb as far as Sirhind, but, unfortunately, he had not been able effectively to stem the rise of the Chaks, a people of obscure origin, who for more than a century had gradually been gaining power and influence.

Northerners by race, they were Shias by religion, and seemed to have possessed the strength and courage of the warlike tribes of Central Asia, coupled with the instability and lack of steadfastness which is the weakness of migratory peoples. However, having won the supreme power in the course of the sixteenth century, they made a firm stand against Akbar and his army, and in 1582, aided by the natural features of the country, defeated the invader. But this success was only temporary. Those of the Kashmiris who did not follow the faith of their ruler made cause with Akbar, and after many battles and much desultory fighting, Kashmir passed from the rule of Sultans under the power of the Moguls.

They inaugurated a period of great splendour, and if the country occasionally suffered from the harsh rule of cruel regents, appointed when the emperors were away in their southern capital of Delhi, on the whole, the people shared in the prosperity of their chiefs. Akbar was too much occupied enlarging his boundaries and consolidating his empire to spend much time in Kashmir, but he built the Hari Parbat fort, and encouraged other works, and made a rough land settlement. His successors loved the Happy Valley, and made it their regular summer residence. Jehangir built here palaces and planted chenaar groves, the Dal Lake was surrounded with vast terraced pleasure-grounds

belonging to him and his nobles, and the air was spiced with the perfumes of the millions of roses and musk plants grown for "attar." His beautiful wife, too, planned and built and further beautified the valley, leaving in far-distant districts evidences of her taste and energetic invention in the countless groves and graceful fountains.

Not content with beautifying his domains, his successor, Shah Jehan, governed his people well through clever subordinates, who upheld his power by finally subduing the Chaks, and also engendered good feeling by treating the people with consideration and reducing various vexatious imposts. Less amiable was Aurungzeb, whose short visit to the valley remained impressed on the memories of the people by reason of its terrible consequences, as the relentless persecution of the Brahmins.

Under later emperors the central authority of Delhi was much weakened, and the provincial governors, including the Subah of Kashmir, became virtually independent, and used their power to worry their "misfortunate" people, till in 1751 these fell from the frying pan into the fire, and became subject to Pathan rule, the worst they had yet known.

The Shahani Durani period shows no relieving point, and squeezed by rapacious governors, tortured by cruel kings, persecuted for their religion, and forced to witness the destruction of beautiful memories left from happier times, the lot of the wretched Kashmirians was unenviable. Eventually, considering any change must be for the better, they invited Ranjit Singh, the great Sikh leader, the Lion of the Punjâb, to turn out their ruler. The work was accomplished and the price paid, but a worthless Mussulman, Muhamad Azim Khan, being left

in power, he neglected to pay tribute, hoarded treasure, and gave himself up to the delights of torturing Hindus. Ranjit Singh was again appealed to. This time he came in person with his army, accompanied by the Rajah of Jammu and Poonch, also a Sikh, and the governor fled before him. Moti Ram was left in possession, and did much towards the pacification and improvement of the people, but he was succeeded by less able and energetic men, and famine and sickness ravaged the land. Finally, Mian Singh, a fine soldier, was sent, and governed wisely and well. In 1843 the country was disturbed by the turbulent tribe known as the Bombas, an alien people, their leader having been entrapped and imprisoned. They rose, raided, and plundered. The Jammu Rajah, Gulab Singh, sought to intervene, and appointed a Mahomedan governor. Then for a time anarchy prevailed, but finally the country, having been ceded to British Government as part of the indemnity claimed from the Sikhs, we decided to hand it over to Jammu. The Mahomedan governor then objected, and it was not till a British army had made its appearance that the country finally and absolutely passed into Hindu hands, the Maharajah Gulab Singh being of Dogra race.

Here I will put in a short explanation of the word "Dogra," which will leave most people, so far as understanding it goes, very much where they began, for the vagueness of Indian terms is only to be equalled by the assurance with which they are used! Dogra was originally applied to the people dwelling between Siroensar and Mansar—two lakes—and they claimed Rajput origin. Now there are many castes and many sects among these people. To one and all the term

Dogra is applied, and the only limits of the term are those of locality, for it is applied to hill tribes of all faiths within a certain area. They have all the strong, warlike qualities generally associated with people brought up in a wild, rough land, and their chiefs have proved worthy and enlightened rulers of the grand province, ceded wrongly, as some hold, to them by the British. Our Government at the time felt unable to cope with all the vast additions to the then Indian Empire. Its organisation had not proved elastic or adaptive enough to keep pace with the energies of the military commanders, and few then believed in the possibility of our holding territory beyond the Himalayas.

It is perhaps a good thing that we did not overburden ourselves. The rulers have proved good friends to the Indian authorities, as was proved by the conduct of Gulab Singh in '57, and that of the present ruler during the troublesome war in Hunza Nagar, and owing to the loyal carrying out of Mr. Walter Lawrence's land settlement scheme the people are in as fair a way to enjoy to the utmost the advantages of living in a rich land as if directly under British rule. Many small vexatious restrictions as to building, etc., have been relaxed, and the wise administration of game laws and the improvement of the tracks—it is an obvious misuse of terms to talk of roads in Kashmir—will show that the country suffers little from being only indirectly under the Sirkar.

To return to Gulab Singh. He died in '57, and his wise policy was continued by his successor, Ranbir Singh, who did much for agriculture, and showed himself hospitable to Europeans, and ready to imitate their institutions, such as hospitals and schools, while being

extremely liberal towards those of his subjects who were not co-religionists. The present Maharajah, Pertab Singh, is G.C.S.I., and a worthy follower of the traditions of his family. Under his kind and wise rule, aided and advised as he has been and is by many Englishmen of influence and power, the valley bids fair to rival in prosperity the most favoured parts of the world, and one need not fear to be considered too sanguine if hoping that the days of misery, bloodshed, and anarchy, which were once so frequent in this fertile valley, are things of the past, and that the far-stretching lands of H.H. the Maharajah, including, besides Kashmir proper, Ladakh, Gilgit, Skardo Astor, and Jammu, may continue to enjoy the *Pax Britannica.*

Among other innovations which have proved very beneficial to the people has been the training under the guidance of British officers of a certain number of men as Imperial service troops. These have proved smart and efficient, and their conduct goes far to support their own theory that, till the virile spirit had been crushed out of them by the tyranny of successive conquerors, they were a warlike people. But nothing has done more to raise the people than the land settlement and the various edicts connected therewith, which, among other benefits, did away as far as possible with the iniquitous systems of forced labour till then in vogue. Now the Kashmirian is, on the whole, a prosperous person, no longer thwarted in all attempts at improved agriculture by the increasing exactions of officials. His inborn industrious habits have full play, and the naturally rich soil gives forth of her best and richest. An increased market, too, means higher prices, and the improvement of the communications with far-distant India by means

of the completed Srinagar-Pindi road has raised prices and improved greatly the conditions of life.

The manufactured goods—carpets, embroideries, papier-mâché, copper, and silver work—when of first-rate quality, command ready purchasers in India and England, and when the merchants thoroughly understand that, with artistic productions thoroughness and good taste are more essential than cheapness, city dwellers will have little to complain of. Of course, as in all countries where a new system has been introduced and set working, revolutionising suddenly old methods and old ideas, a certain amount of opposition or half-hearted support go far to mar complete success, and to those to whom modern economical studies are new ground, it is difficult to prove that a system which raises the cost of living, even if it produce higher wages and richer products, can be really desirable.

Our trump card in working in this protected state, where we can only "advise," leaving the "command" to native officials, has been the impartial energy and acknowledged integrity of our officials. To all and every merchant, and even to lambardars (headmen) of distant villages, the word, even of an unofficial, unknown traveller, is as good as a bond; they will take cheques on unheard-of banks, receive I O U's on scraps of old paper as if they were coin of the realm, and cheerfully consent to manufacture and despatch wares to London without pre-payment, and if there is doubt as to the value of metal in some antique or curio, they will trust to the purchaser to have the same valued fairly out of the country. A small instance of the implicit trust reposed in a Sahib and of the way it is merited was brought to my attention one day in Srinagar by a

Modern Royal Buildings, Srinagar

merchant, who asked me to read to him a letter just arrived enclosing some money. This had been sent by an officer who had taken with him some Kabuli stamps, and as there had been no guide to their value, he had not bargained, but promised to send the full catalogued price when he could find again a catalogue, and this he had done immediately on his return, sending quite double what had been originally asked! The coinage causes a little difficulty owing to the difference between the native rupee, the "chilki," worth about ten annas, and the Imperial rupee, of sixteen annas. There is also a "kham" rupee in circulation, bearing the letters I.H.S., about which there are many strange tales, and this being a land of small payments, care should be taken to impress the value of the coin given on the payee, for the ignorant people are sadly victimised by the changers.

The modern royal buildings in Srinagar are hardly things of beauty or worth a visit, but it is pleasant to think that all concerned in these works have been paid in coin, and the old meritricious system of payment in kind, a great source of misery to the people, has been completely superseded. The waterworks at Srinagar have alone put over three million rupees into circulation for wages, and many other public works are in progress.

H.H. has done much to help the suffering, and his hospitals and State dispensaries are not only charming buildings, many of them brightened with pretty gardens, but they have conferred a boon so great it is difficult to estimate, for, though as a race Kashmiris are sturdy and healthy, insanitary conditions produce terrible epidemics and cause a great deal of suffering, and among the cultivators the conditions of rice-growing lend them-

selves to much rheumatism, lumbago, and kindred ills. As I returned across the lake to my pretty Gupcar home after my farewell visit to the city, it was with the feeling that I was saying good-bye not only to a most beautiful land, richly endowed with Nature's best and rarest gifts, but to a people happy in their government, and with every encouragement to improve their condition; a people who, after centuries of a terrible black tunnel of misery, anarchy, and oppression, had emerged on the sunny side of the hill.

In my last chapter I will speak of the country as it affects European residents.

CHAPTER XX

We flash across the level,
  We thunder thro' the bridges,
We bicker down the cuttings,
  We sway along the ridges.
A rush of streaming hedges,
  Of jostling lights and shadows,
Of hurtling, hurrying stations,
  Of racing woods and meadows.
—*Henley.*

Of joltings and jarrings—Wild ponies and fair ways—A gentleman in khaki discusses the empire with one of the holy army—The seamy side of an Indian summer—Homeward bound.

THE last hours of my stay in the Happy Valley had arrived, and long before the sun rose to wake the inhabitants to another gorgeous day, I should be on my way, the first stage of a weary, toilsome journey that, with but few hours' rest here and there on my passage through India, I was to accomplish without break from Srinagar to London during the hottest time of the year, and under the torturing conditions of an unbroken monsoon. With such an early start before me it seemed an unnecessary torment of the flesh to go to bed at all, but the consideration of those two hundred miles to

Pindi to be accomplished in two days, decided me at least to enjoy the happiness of a few hours on my back, as an enforced uprightness was likely to be my lot for the best part of the next forty-eight hours.

A wild thunderstorm burst about midnight, relieving the overburdened atmosphere. It had been intensely hot, and no breathing thing had been able to rest quietly while the tempest was brewing, and through the open windows and doors, set ajar to catch the faintest breath of air, the uneasy movements of my escort sleeping in the open, the stirrings of ponies could be heard, and in my head I felt that nerve chords were being screwed tighter, tighter. Thank Heaven it had come! Round the hills roared and echoed and repeated the thunder. The length and breadth of the Dal was illumined with white flame, the over-powering scent of flowers was diluted by the rain drops from scintillating sheets of liquid crystal. Relieved of one tension, understanding at last why our own life had been so painfully conscious to us, as if aware of our imprisoned spirits as distinct entities, we turned and slept when the fading away of the noiseful thunder permitted it, the coolies and jampanis below rolling up in their blankets, sheltered by the verandah.

The unearthly white flare of the false dawn was in the sky when I got up an hour or so later, and the stars, fresh flashed, winked with that pleasant pertness they win from rain clouds. A cup of tea was a grateful opener of sleepy eyes, and with a queasy feeling that I had parted company with all comforts for an indefinite period, I said good-bye, salaaming gravely to the muffled ghosts that arose from dark passages, shady verandahs, outside houses as I passed into the garden. Once more

"good-bye" as I packed into the rickshaw, good-bye to perfumed rose bushes, to great, gorgeous hollyhocks, to graceful ipomœas, "plume-waving ferns," and pearly portulacas. They had all come to perfection since I first saw them, showing sketchily their future charms, and their pleasant, bright faces now looked ghostly and sad, sprinkled with rain-drop tears, and white in the starlight. Nature is generally so unsympathetic, so aloof from the joys and sorrows of the mortals that walk lovingly in her ways, studying her face and taking careful note of her mysteries, that this little exhibition of feeling touched me, and as my jinrickshaw was quickly run down the path, I turned again to wave farewell to the tall ones of the flock, that craned long necks over the wall, or threw long tendrils across, to afford me a last glimpse.

Quickly down the road we passed, slowing as we mounted to the gap, faster again on the long descent to the Residency, then under the deep shade of giant poplars to the mail office, a picturesque thatched building of nogged brickwork. Naturally I had to wait; that is the East, one eternal waiting where the fittest (those who survive) know best how to work and "wait," the fate of those who "hustle the East" is writ elsewhere with certainty.

That July night there was little hardship in lingering when the alternative was a passage in a stuffy waggon. The moon had set early, the skies were clean swept, the light unseen, hidden by the gaunt eastern ranges, could be guessed at as the stars nearing the rocky heights were nipped out. They, too, were saying good-bye, and the unfeeling sun was having his way cleared before him, prepared to shine as

cheerfully and unconcernedly as if no sad farewells were taking place, no hearts full of sorrow for partings.

Presently a quaint covered vehicle rattled up. Into its canvas-covered maw many bags were thrown, my small traps were banged on top, and I contrived to crawl in. The driver took the heavy leathern straps doing duty as reins, and we hurtled off. I have been run away with, I have hunted on wheels in Ireland, and I have raced in a two-wheeled cart for a wager, but nothing had prepared me for that wild thirty-mile burst to Baramula. I have not ridden a mad bull through space, nor been dropped from the moon in a barrel with iron coigns, but I imagine a combination of the two would approximate our pace and progress!

Our first wild ponies were changed for others, and these again every six miles, and except that some stood on their tails while others attempted a like feat on their heads, and that some always wished to commence their career by running down any handy steep bank, while others preferred going round and round in a vicious circle, there was no whit more virtue in one pair than another. Meanwhile I was doing assistant mail distributor at various points where bags have to be given out or collected, the driver suggesting that as I could read I might see that the bags which had nearly smothered me in a preliminary rumble-tumble were correctly rearranged, he literally having his hands full with the "ribbons." For which labour I have not as yet received any remuneration from the P.O. authorities, nor even a tip from those who benefited by the correct distribution of their letters that morning!

An hour or two of this progression taught me various things, and wedging each foot firmly round the supports of the seat, putting two large cushions between my left

elbow and the side, and ceasing to consider the coachman as anything but an angular buffer—the fiercest joltings or buffetings from me never upset his perfect equilibrium gained by long practice—I was able to spare a small amount of attention to the glorious scene I was passing through.

Blue and white will always remain the colours of the valley in my memory, a blueness born of distance, clear skies, bright waters, and the prevailing tint of the flowers — just then chickory and flax — that bordered the road. The high peaks were still crowned with snow, roses and clematis threw their festoons over all and everything, while there lingered in a few places some late white iris, and the white water lilies and lotus adorned every pond and bank with their golden-hearted cups. The heat was great as the hours went by, and a splitting head and sore bones detracted from the joy of living, so that only a spasmodic attention could be turned to the things of the road. Pan's pipes only wailed, and an angry antagonism to the fates that had decreed such annoyance to the unoffending pilgrim was the prevailing emotion.

Late in the afternoon we reached Garhi, close, oppressive, and noisy. In the dâk (mail) cart walking had seemed a progress of the gods, but, free of my canvas cage and on the road, all desire to stir departed; my limbs were aching machines useless for movement. I lay down, but the flies were distracting, and a noisy party on the verandah banished sleep. So strengthened with tea, I sallied forth to examine the strange Jhula bridge, which connected the bank I was on with the thither side. On essaying it, it proved vastly safer than it looked, and the ropes of buffalo hide, for foothold and guiding lines, were neither

so slippery nor so swinging as I had imagined, quite robbing my small effort of the joy of accomplishing a perilous adventure. Like many of the pleasures sought after in this world, the joys of "dangers" are sadly overrated, or at least they are generally remunerative only in anticipation, or as a memory. At the moment they prove either insipidly tame or err in the other direction and are fatal, and then there is no gauge of their pleasantness. Other species of bridge used across the Jhelum are the "chika," a stout cable by which people are slung across in a basket; the sangha, a single span, constructed somewhat on the cantilever principle, and protected with strong abutments; and the "targari," a simple arrangement of two planks.

An uneasy night, hot and fly-beridden, prepared me to rise betimes with a thankful spirit that the dark watches were over, and my last day of progress on wheels—I will not call it driving—begun. It was a lovely road, the attractions of which could not be wholly destroyed by a blazing sun or aching head; but I have written of it before, and it was in no whit changed in its principal features, and by these I mean the roughness of its ways and the grandeur of its guardian mountains. The trees, however, had put on another mantle, exchanging their *jejeune* tints for a richer green, and the delicate hawthorns and daphnes of early spring had been replaced by gaudy pomegranates and luscious-scented jessamines. Many wild fruits, including strawberries, raspberries, small plums, apricots, and apples, stocked these cool larders in the dark woods, while the monkeys proved to us that the nuts were fast ripening by throwing their shells at us.

Life in the East assists a casual temperament and

manner of existence, and it is no surprising thing to meet a sahib by the roadside waiting at the nearest dâk bungalow for his kit to arrive at some place a hundred miles away, or to pass, lying peacefully under a shady tree, a pony tethered close by waiting for a master due for a station a week's journey off.

We picked up that day, and conveyed for a short distance a cheery and optimistic sub., who thought his things ought to be somewhere about, as he had seen them off by the more usual route three weeks before, while he in "light marching order," I believe it consisted of a pâl (small tent without centre pole) and one cooking pot—but there may have been some small etceteras—came with a pony over the passes from the Poonch country. Subsequently I heard he found the major portion of his belongings awaiting him at Dulai, just within Kashmir territory, but a sun topi, a pony, and a poshteen (sheepskin coat) were not retrieved till days later, they having tumbled over the "khud" (cliff side), and though not much injured, they had preferred remaining in the village they had literally fallen upon to rejoining the other servants, who had not been at all worried by their absence.

It is impossible to lose things in such a country where every one is either known or to be heard of, and cases dumped down on the roadside a hundred miles from everywhere, or ponies stranded in distant mountain passes, all come home to roost at last. I speak from experience, for a trunk of mine strayed away over the Himalayas, was carried to Chitral with the Reliefs, got stowed away in a go-down of a carrying agent, and finally met me at a down-country

station! I have been shown an address on a piece of paper while far from the beaten track in the eastern end of the valley, and directed a befogged coolie to his proper destination at Gulmerg, and a friend, hurriedly ordered to join the Tochi Valley army, welcomed eventually his pony, sent off at the same time as himself, after two months, during which time it and its "sais" had been nearly all over the North-West frontier, in and out of the fighting zone, having first gone to a place somewhat akin in name but two hundred miles away from the scene of action! Fortunately in India the old home rule, "'Ere's a stranger, 'eave a brick at him," is reversed. Out there we are all one vast white family, and one does one's brother, or his ponies, or his chattels a good turn whenever opportunity occurs, knowing that in all human probability the day will not be far off when we shall welcome a return in money or kind! Stranger, G. T., griffin, whatever opprobrious title I had a right to, I was made free of all the privileges of my caste from the moment of arrival, and it will always be a matter of regret to me that I had no power of "doing likewise."

A few new books, a plentiful supply of papers, a small power of musicking, and a slight fund of information about the march of events "at home," was all the slender return I could make for countless kindnesses, boundless hospitality. Fortunately these trifles must not be gauged by their intrinsic value, but considered as they are in a country where literature and art, as we understand them in England, are practically non-existent for the white sojourner.

Murree was reached early in the afternoon, and I there renewed my acquaintance with that "darkest of earth's dark places," an Indian hotel. In my pleasant

sojournings in my canvas house, or under the doonga's straw roof, I had forgotten them and their noisome interior. Their bareness and insufficiency were now borne in upon me with all the freshness of new acquaintance — dirty, ragged, ceiling cloths, stained walls, the plaster peeling off in great flakes, scraps of cotton carpets, serving no purpose save the tripping up of the unwary, chairs with fragmentary legs, tables of unplaned wood, draped with cotton cloths of another decade, a bed with furnishings that filled the imagination with awesome phantoms, iron washstands and cracked crockery, a glass minus its quicksilver, and a window dark with dust—for these luxuries, plus three daily meals of more than ordinary deadliness, does the wanderer in India pay prices that at home would procure if not luxuries, at least comfort and cleanliness.

Oh, ye managers of country inns and ye manageresses of seaside hotels away in England, why not leave the country of over-competition, where you are crowded out by sheer weight of numbers, and in a new land introduce another system and a more consoling cookery which shall be composed of other compounds than curries and custards?

Having elected to rest a few hours among the pine trees at Murree, my dâk tonga proceeded without me. I finished my journey in another, a public vehicle, a private one not being procurable at such short notice in mid-season. By half-past four we were rattling off again, worn out by the rough-and-tumble method of jolting over three hundred miles of road. For some time I realised nothing but my discomfort, first thrown backwards and forwards till my head and neck held

uneasily together, then borne from side to side as the wheels bounded over stone and clods. I gave praise to my sun-topee that saved the battering of my skull against the iron support of the cover, though it must somewhat seriously have incommoded the driver when as happened at frequent intervals, it hurtled against him, his high white pâgri only protecting him partially.

I was aroused to taking a more active interest in the surroundings by the conversation of my fellow-travellers a khaki-clad sergeant of a British regiment, and a trooper of a Bengal Lancer corps in the usual white mufti. When I first listened the latter was stating with some pride that he was a Sikh, the sergeant was not interested, still he was polite, and evidently considered that time passes quicker if you make conversation with your companions, even if they are "a rum lot," the usual epithet bestowed by Thomas Atkins on natives of all ranks and kinds. "I don't think I know rightly what the Sikhs are," said he, which answer led to an explanation and history of that notable folk, delivered with a fluency and vivacity few inhabitants of our tongue-tied isles could accomplish in his own language let alone a foreign tongue; and he gave details of Nanah Shah and his Bible called the Granth, and of his famous successor of the sixteenth century, the Guru, Govind Singh. The sergeant was surprised into interest; these people evidently made a religion of what was to him the A B C of life's conduct; he obeyed commands, kept himself clean, had his own code of morals, because—well, because any one who was a "decent sort" did the same. This chap, to arrive at the same

result, required a whole hierarchy of teachers, a tremendous load of precepts. It was incomprehensible and called for an explanation or two; these were satisfactory; and then he said in an astonished voice, "You seem to have the same kind of Bible as we have; not as I knows much of it, but I hear the chaplain and that is the sort of way he talks." The Sikh's voice took a curious mystic tone, "It is all one, but we have our way and you have yours; we live and die and have our gods which are really one; ours is the better way, but all paths lead to the same end." This the khaki one was not inclined to agree to. It was all very well talking to a native, and this one seemed a decent one, and, being a lancer, was likely to be some good; but he could not allow a religion to be called the same as his, which worshipped elephant-headed gods, was prodigal with scents and flowers, and permitted plurality of wives and child-marriage. His remarks, as customary with his countrymen, were stated curtly, a trifle contemptuously. His antagonist was perfectly courteous; far more accurate and cultured, a little conceited, perhaps. He submitted that they did not worship idols, "certain figures, Krishna, Ganesh, etc., embodied attributes of the 'great unknown'; you, too, have figures, I have seen them in your churches." As for the wife question, that is not correct for a well-bred native to discuss, but child-marriage and the veiling of the women were memorials of rougher times, stormy periods for the weak, he explained, no part of their scheme of life. When the Mussulman was all-powerful in the land, the only possible protection to women was by the covering of their faces, and as the Mussulman freebooter frequently kidnapped young

girls for the Imperial harem, they were married as children and then hidden to save them from a terrible fate.

The mention of some event in the second Sikh war brought into prominence the familiarity of the native with all the principal dates of our occupation and knowledge of its history. The discussion began to lack interest; it caught fresh fire from the sergeant's summing-up—"Jolly glad you'd all be to kick us out again." The unconscious discourtesy and tactlessness were blatantly British. Pat came the protest, so self-evident as to be almost proverbial, the Sikh speaking pompously, a trifle priggishly, as is the immemorial custom of natives when they utter a truism. He was sincere, however, "Why should we? Are we so powerful that we could subdue the hated Mahomedans, or would they again make cause with the Mahrattis? When to uphold liberty's sacred cause would you find the Pathans or Bengalis fighting against your 'glorious' government?" (I am sorry to note that the sergeant sniggled audibly at the qualifier.) "Your Government says, 'each man follow his own religion, don't be fools and make riot with each other, and then we will not interfere with you.' Your government very strong, and your soldiers well armed," he added significantly.

A common thought struck them. "But the Russians," suggested Mr. Atkins, feeling himself a politician. The Sikh's face grew stern; he had come to facts, and, after all, for a soldier these were worth more than argument, though a native's subtle mind seizes on these with avidity. "You have heard of Penjdeh, Sir Peter Lumsden, the Pamir delimitation?" The sergeant nodded;

he hardly felt up to cross-examination, though the names brought a hazy memory. "I was of the guard; hard, hard life that; stone for pillow; no tents; short rations; marching day after day and evening all round Pathans, Russians" (sinking his voice), "and never permission to fire one little shot; that *was* hard" —the sergeant nodded sympathetically. "I might have caught ——" (the Sikh forbore his regrets and continued). "We heard much of the Russians, and a Turkoman here, another tribesman there would come to camp for protection; the Russian troops had been in their houses; their general no give protection to Turkoman or their women." Details of unattractive character followed, summed up by—"These peoples never help Russian against English; your government good; but ——." The conversation dwindled into a discussion over certain local and working defects of the "Sirkar."

The khaki one jerked his words, and added to his meaning by strange slang and those foolish non-meaning expressions so often used by our lower classes as witticisms. I doubted if the Sikh ever even guessed his meaning, or if either were within hailing distance of each other's working consciousness; but it is one of the rewards of travel that we sometimes are made to realise that there are methods of thought differing from our own, and that we misunderstand them, our sordid self-sufficiency receives pin-pricks which permit the ingress of perceptions of others' individualities, differing minds. "Well, you are brave people," epiloguized the sergeant with sincerity but a touch of patronage, for, of course, of his own countrymen the fact was too patent to be mentioned. "Yes, we brave men," concurred the Sikh

sincerely too, without noticing the patronage, "and will fight again for you."

"Now those Afridis they knew we'd just pour in men and guns again and again till we had the best of it, but they fought us, though they only rode for a fall." The Sikh relished but moderately the comparison with the Pathan, their immemorial race antagonists, so he merely added, "Well, we fought them too; it is good fighting, but not being guard, when not one little shot at enemy allowed." This, at least, was a common sentiment, and though the sergeant gave vent to his dislike of India and all things pertaining thereto, his companion bore no ill-will, bidding good-bye with all the flowery expressions that pass current in the East; the other nodded curtly.

"Rum devils," he ejaculated, as the lithe white figure disappeared in the gloom; and so we of alien races shall always be to each other. Our fighting instincts give us at least one common ground, and a religious tolerance touches their sympathies, and just so long as we keep up their pride as soldiers, and give them liberty to choose their own methods of approaching the "Unknown," so long shall we strengthen the only bonds possible between East and West.

All the way from Murree we had been penetrating deeper into the burning pit, and as we entered the station of Pindi we stifled, the weight of unbroken thunderstorms heavy upon us. I was almost asleep as the tonga drew up before my hostess's bungalow, and I fell out into kind, welcoming arms, and was restored with tea and refreshments. It was nearly midnight, but no breeze had arisen to break the awful monotony

of heat. I was among workers once again, and the realities of Indian life struck harshly on me. It was a sad record I received of the period while I had been absent, and enteric and heat were the chief factors in it. As I looked at white faces and thin drawn hands, one needed to apologise for one's existence as a leisured person in a world of strenuous endeavour.

"Yes, it has been very bad," said one; "only two showers to represent the rains, and with the reduced hot weather garrison over thirty cases of enteric. Still, we do what we can, but the wards in the hospital are over 94 deg. at nine in the morning. If the men stay they die, and if they go they die. You knew Captain ——? He had fever, a touch; made sure Murree would cure it; of course, the jolting up and the cold did for him. He died three hours after he arrived. What gives enteric? Everything they say, water, milk, cold, heat! I think it's dust storms. Sorry to trouble us? Thank goodness you have come; you are worth your weight in gold if you will talk of anything but fever and deaths, at least during meals."

I turned in almost too tired to note the great pile of correspondence awaiting me, but in that heat no punkah even could induce sleep; so I took a Europe morning, and dawdled slowly through my dressing, standing under the punkah to gasp between each short stage. The kind sister came in; she also had not slept, but then she had already put in four hours in the wards. The white face in the daylight was more piteous than it had been at night. "I can't sleep ever in the daytime, and at night all the native city wakes up, so there is no quiet then either," was a simple explanation. "The worst is, that terrible as this want of rain is now in its

present effects, imagine the awful amount of suffering from famine and disease it entails. It has been good to see a sunburnt face. Tell them at home what hot weather is like."

The carriage was so hot as I left in the mail train that night that salamanders would have thought it homelike. A weary, anxious-faced woman, lightly clad—we had dropped into muslin dressing gowns as soon as the station was left—was fanning a tiny, wizened morsel of humanity. I took a turn—any diversion to self-centred thought was welcome—while she prepared food over an etna, runlets of heat pouring down face and neck.

"You see," she explained, "I took baby to the hills, and Jack was to join us, but they wired for me two days ago; it seems he is down with fever, and I could not leave baby with any one, people do not like the responsibility of a sick child, but it does seem a pity to bring him down just when he was beginning to look so bonnie." The sight of the babe's wrinkled mouth and tiny limbs made me shudder. "And it is so bad for him travelling so quickly, but, of course, I felt I must come on, and I am to look out for wires, they promised to send one if there were a change or anything."

That night mocking demons continually looked in at the window, and gibing mouths taunted us as we passed on, heat phantoms jeering at the weary ghosts who had at times believed that the world was made for them, but were being taught by a thousand tortures that they were no lords of creation, just impotent factors in the world's hierarchy. It is given us to win victories sometimes, but the price is promptly entered against us. Just

then it was the turn of those in India to pay the price of empire and vast-added territories, and climate, unfortunately, has still to be conquered.

If Pindi had been hot, Umballa station was the under-side of a molten mass of metal. Unexpectedly a friend was on the platform, nearly unrecognisable from the cheery cold-weather comrade I had known. "I am the only one in the station, I believe; the bungalow cannot be worse than the train, and there is a night mail to go on by." I said good-bye to the sad-eyed mother, and passed quickly from that burning platform to the dusty, thirsty mall. We drove, we drank cold drinks, we sat under punkahs, and a "boy" fanned me, but not one single moment of coolness was to be obtained. "Have you heard there is cholera below? They had only two days' rains, but they were enough to set it going. They talk, too, of trouble again in the Swat Valley before the month is out, but I'm afraid there'll be no such good luck; anything's better than rotting out here in this copper stewing-pan. My best sergeant went out with heat apoplexy last week, and I should be gone too only I get to the hills every ten days or so. I pity those poor devils down in Central India, nowhere to go to, and they are dying like flies of enteric at M—— this season. Ah, it's good to see any one sunburnt; talk to me and tell me about the snows. Yes, everything; and did you see any bear; and was Jerky Jones up there; and was it beautifully cold?"

By midnight I was into the train again. By this time the carriage was a scalding coffin, and that particular one was ornamented with thousands of flies. They squelched as I lay down and caught in my hair,

and tormented my arms; but I hoped for another rest in eighteen hours' time—a short stay at a Central Indian station I had visited in December, and remembered for the beauty of its immemorable flowers. A weary-eyed figure stopped me as I was leaving the carriage. "You must not stay here, we have cholera." The train moved on.

This, then, was the glorious East, the other side of the shield, unseen, unguessed at by itinerant M.P.'s and cold-weather visitors. Punkahs are a pleasing pretence when the weather is little warmer than an ordinary English summer's day, playing at the tropics, as the G.T. gaily remarks as he sips iced sodas in an easy lounge with a thermometer that scarcely touches 86, but somewhere the furnaces are being stoked. Swiftly and suddenly the short cold season is superseded by monotonous months of sweltering sunshine. Will the rains never come to put an end to the suspense? And sometimes they come, but as a mockery. A shower or two, a sense of slight relief, and the awful fact is borne in that the rains have again failed, the monsoon will not break, there can be no change till heavy snows on those stern guardians of Upper India bring some slight alleviation to the weary watchers on the far-distant plains.

My journey to Bombay was accomplished to a sad, monotonous refrain, a death song sung by suffering people beneath a pitiless sun. A description of these things savours of exaggeration; having seen them silence seems the only course. Certain ills must be borne, and it is best not to make them too evident, otherwise none could bear to face them; for that reason folk at home do not have much mention of this side of Indian life.

Bombay was unbearably self-conceited over its cool climate. It described itself as cold, and in proof thereof went about clad in serge suits and light woollen coats and skirts. The steaminess they do not mind, and after the frying pans I had been in, 92 and 93 were a pleasant change.

Then the voyage, and to those who desire comfort and coolness I do not advise a return home in July. Though on shore its effects had been small, on the ocean the monsoon was terribly obvious, and a close cabin for five days at a stretch is not conducive to enjoyment.

Wearily the days passed; most of the servants were down with fever from the close air resulting from battened-down hatches, and it was a weak, wan company that re-visited the decks at Aden and compared notes over experiences that had been of a deadly monotonous character.

It was hot in the Red Sea, but the change to open ports and tranquil decks was blissful, and sleeping in long chairs in the open air, catching whatever of breeze the dawn brought, carried me back pleasantly to my camping days and the joys of a star-lit canopy. The colouring of the banks is a never-ceasing pleasure, and the gorgeous blue of the sea, and the brilliant rainbows to be discovered in every wave that breaks against the side of the steamer, the flights of swallows like flying fish, the gambols of the huge schools of porpoises—all these things help to fill the long hours with images of beauty and small but absorbing interests after being shut up between four very compressed walls.

Then came Port Said, with its reek of hot insanitary soil, its repelling flashy shows and shops, and its loafing

population, made up of a hundred international varieties of the genus "shark."

The Mediterranean had accomplished a happy medium of climate, and the atmosphere was that of a perfect summer day. So my wanderings drew to a close. Any small discomforts or fatigues I had endured were forgotten or decently shrouded in a golden mist of pleasant memories. All I retained was my early conviction that the "vale of Cashmere" was worthy of many years of wishing for, many efforts to reach. There are many lands to see on this earth; many I wish to visit; that I shall find one fairer I cannot hope.

CONCLUSION

Ye who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
A thought that once was his, if on ye swell
A single recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal shoon and scallop shell.
Farewell!

—*Byron.*

A FEW last considerations about Kashmir. Is it suitable as a place for permanent residents? Does it offer such advantages as a healthy climate, one suitable for growing children and elder folk who can no longer stand the trying extremes of the Plains? Are there any professions open to Englishmen apart from the Government offices? and are there new industries and trades to be opened up?

As a holiday ground I do not think I need add anything to what I have said, for I shall indeed have written in vain if I have not shown in some small degree the inexpressible charm of this wondrous country for the wanderer and vagrant; but as a haven of rest for the official worn out with incessant work in India, and too poor to care to begin life again in England, or for those who have found it impossible to stand the fogs or damp of our little island, I have still some remarks to make.

As to climate it is difficult to imagine more healthy conditions than those offered in a country where the

winters, though cold, are dry, and there is no real rainy season, the damp weather spreading itself over the summer months. Rains being very local, too, it is not difficult to remove from too plashy parts to drier regions. In cases of consumption and heart disease the climate has proved peculiarly restorative, and the dryness of the cold months makes it delightful to those to whom ordinary cold is trying. Malarial fever is not at all common, and enteric is practically unknown. In such cases as are recorded, the germs of the disease have been brought into the country by the sufferers. Children thrive here as they would in England, and look as bonnie and ruddy; in fact, if it were not for the difficulties of education, there is no reason that they should ever be sent home. Even this difficulty may eventually be overcome.

Men of education and college training have gone out as heads of native schools, and if the number of residents increases in the way it has of late, it may be a profitable undertaking for one to turn his talents and attention to the instruction and training of white youth. For girls the difficulties are less considerable. Many a young woman with a taste for seeing over her own potato patch and wandering afield, tired of the struggle at home among many competitors for paid teaching, will be glad to go out and follow her profession in a country where much is done to ameliorate the dreariness of a governess's life.

Then for hobbies and amusements there is ample provision. Various English gardens I visited, blazing with flowers raised from English seeds and plants, were an encouragement to any with the smallest taste for gardening. Rich soil, clear, abundant supply of water, a

strong sun, and cheap labour—are not these conditions good enough to tempt the laziest to make the small effort necessary to produce such rich results? The heat is never so great as to make work unpleasant, and it is vastly more repaying than in the plains. Then there is much to be done in the way of collecting, complete and careful collections of natural products, minerals, flowers, etc., being badly wanted for an accurate knowledge of the country. Good specimens of coins, curios, and stamps are in demand, for there is not yet anything like a real record of the land.

Besides these things, much can be learned from the natives themselves and their methods of carving, painting, and metal beating are curious and worth imitation. For those who prefer out-door exercises, every kind can be enjoyed—boating, swimming in the summer, skating, tobogganing, and sleighing in the winter. There are good links in various places for golfers. Tennis can also be indulged in, and for men there are cricket and football of varying quality. Riding of every sort is to be had—from polo, on well-kept grounds, to wild paper chases, and still wilder hunts and wanderings on pony backs among the mountains, where the difficulties and dangers are such as to please the most ardent seeker of adventure.

For the artistic, the land is so full of beauties of every kind that no one for an instant need be without subject for pencil, brush, or camera, and music may be indulged as in no other part of India, the climate being kinder to all instruments. Pianos do not go out of tune after an hour's rains, or violins, zithers, etc., crack from long-continued drought as they do in those parts where extremes and changes are more sudden.

And for men without professions, what openings are there? The question is difficult to answer with certainty, for in a newly-opened country so much must be of a purely experimental nature. Certain things have been tried, and found either successful, or what is really as good, found to contain the germs of success—I mean the grounds of their failures have been gauged and proved to be remediable. Of those things about which there remains a great deal of uncertainty may be mentioned the mineral wealth. There are reports of large quantities of iron of fine quality to be found in certain parts, notably the Soh district. Other minerals, too, are in sufficient quantities to make their working profitable, and the discovery of fine sapphires leads to the supposition that other native tales of precious stones among the mountains are worth at least some attention and sufficient credence to produce an active search.

The manufactures are much benefited by English advice and supervision, many of them requiring only to be better known to become in greatly increased demand, the quality of the raw materials used in such things as cloths, carpets, silks, etc., and the perfection of the hand work making them certain of a favourable verdict wherever shown, however great the number of competitors.

In the matter of fruits, vegetables, and crops generally, the transport must be considered, and the question is a mighty complicated one. The enormous expense and difficulties in the way of making a railway into the Maharajah's domain put it—in the estimation of most of the competent authorities—out of the region of practical enterprise, but a very great deal might be done towards improving the present direct road. It is

seldom closed even in the hardest winters for more than a day or two, and if a better method of keeping it in repair could be devised and a regular service of runners instituted, much could be done towards supplying India with excellent and cheap fruits, nuts, and vegetables, and their sale would bring in a large return to the growers. Even under present conditions with a limited market, and no system of co-operation, fruit and vegetable raising is one of the most profitable industries in the valley, and a huge jam and fruit-preserving factory promised to be a real success, the dearness of sugar and tins being counterbalanced by the cheapness of fruit and labour, till, hampered by the want of competent overseers in the absence of its European head, the business has, for the time, fallen to the ground.

In the near future probably the most paying concerns in Srinagar will be the vineyards and hop gardens. The French vines, originally introduced during Ranbir Singh's reign, did not prove a success, phylloxera being the chief enemy. Others were then brought from America, and, judging by the quality of the wine produced, in spite of the youth of the plantation, and the low price at which they can afford to sell, it should be a great success. Apple brandy is especially in demand, and is a very delectable beverage among the snows. It is difficult, indeed, not to regret its popularity among the natives, for if they understand moderation in such things, they certainly do not practise it. The hops have been an even greater success than the vines, and are largely grown round Soper, and if once the country people take up their cultivation it will become a very important and money-making concern.

Many Englishmen find employment as architects,

road contractors, builders, and engineers. In fact, wherever brains are required to direct and control, there are berths for Englishmen with some technical training, and a reasonable amount of energy and perseverance. Among other purely mercantile businesses that have been taken up by our countrymen are two agencies. "Cockburn's" has achieved a wide reputation for the ever-ready courtesy and consideration with which all orders are undertaken by them, and for the infinite care and attention they bestow on the carrying out of the many and strange requests that they receive.

I would strongly advise all going to travel in Kashmir to make their first visit to this well-stocked house, for the practical advice of the managers on all subjects connected with travel is to be thoroughly relied on, and their recommendations as to boats and servants, etc., are valuable and of great assistance. Hiring all camp and river necessaries saves a great amount of worry and expense too, for the heavy rates for transport from Pindi to Srinagar are the heaviest items of the cost for a temporary sojourner.

Of late years various discomforts that tended to discourage visitors to Srinagar have been removed. A comfortable little dâk bungalow has been built, so that those arriving up tired, or possibly suffering from the long tonga journey, have now some comfortable place where they can recover themselves and collect their various necessaries before starting life in a boat or under canvas.

Of even greater value to Europeans has been the beautiful little cottage hospital, which I have mentioned elsewhere, which is now in working order, attractive in its outward aspect and perfect in its

interior arrangements. Before its completion any travellers in need of medical or surgical care fared badly, without solid walls and roof to shelter them. Under the casual care of chance friends, suffering probably from the great change in climate, there was little chance of recovery if overtaken by any of the diseases contracted in the plains, or disabled by any of the accidents likely to happen to wanderers in strange lands. Now they can be sure of excellent attendance and advice, comfortable quarters, coolness, and the best of food and medi-

Cottage Hospital, Srinagar

cine. Such an institution, established in such distant parts, is a monument of energy and organisation, and all who benefit by this real haven of rest will feel very grateful to those on whom the labour and work of such an undertaking have fallen.

With the last bars to a happy visit removed, none need fear to face the small difficulties of the expedition. During my wanderings I met a lady of more energy than strength, who, quite unable from bad health to

walk or ride, had travelled about the easier portions of Kashmir in a dandy carried by four porters, and was far stronger and better than when she started, and felt that the efforts made to leave her comfortable home and invalid arrangements had been amply repaid by her improved health and the pleasures of the life she had led.

Some countries only impress by their grandeur, some by their charm and the grateful colour of their flower-clad champaigns, while others are attractive as affording scope for exploration or sport. In Kashmir each of these things may be enjoyed, with the additional delights of a healthy climate and friendly inhabitants.

Therefore, to one and all who can go, I say go and see for yourselves! and the harvest of happy memories garnered, the wealth of pictures left in the brain—of sunshiny hours among the snow-crowned hills, and visions of blue waters and bright flowers—the treasures of thought and the suggestions that will have passed from the surrounding scenery into the very source of our life will be an unfading pleasure, a rich reward when once again we "crawl under grey skies," and are choked between narrow walls and huddled in dull streets.

It is not given to man often to be completely content or happy for long together, for which reasons my stay in the Kashmir Valley is endowed with the interest appertaining to unusual experience, an experience that has left my heart full of gratitude to the fates that be, for the gift of a solid block of golden halo'd memories.

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